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ARGOSY



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JUNE 7

10¢

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The Radio
Menace



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we will send you the Corona. Try it 10 days.
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[Corona Division]

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Ship me the Corona, F.O.B. Chicago. On arrival I'll deposit \$2 with ex-
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Address

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- ☐ Electrical Contractor
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Electric Lighting

- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
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- ☐ Toolmaker
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- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating

- ☐ Automobile Mechanic
- ☐ Aviation Engines
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- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
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Address.....

State.....

Occupation.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 212

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Minister's 9-Year Old Boy Runs \$3 into "Fortune"

Former Poor Country Preacher Now Reveals Small Son's Secret That Saved Family Home and Brought Prosperity and Happiness. Tells Easy Way for Any Man or Woman to End Money Worries. A Remarkable Story of Dramatic Facts More Thrilling Than Fiction Because It Is Actually True. A Life Drama With a New Kind of Happy Ending That Will Probably Amaze You Because It Shows How You, Too, Can Find the End of the Rainbow and Get Paid Actual Cash For Just Saying 20 Magic Words to Ladies. No Need to Sell Anything.

AS RELATED

By Rev. C. McMurphy



WITH a sigh of despair Rev. McMurphy thought of the hopelessness of his present situation. Would the home he had just built for his little family be snatched away, he thought? How could he ever meet the builder's notes? How could he even earn a living, now that their little car had given out and they were no longer able to travel and carry on their ministerial work. The outlook was surely despairing.

Then the darkness vanished. And it was his little boy who lifted the shadow. "Daddy," he exclaimed, "I have a surprise. I have a way out of our troubles." Excitedly he told his astonished father of an article he had read about the president of a million dollar institution in Ohio who has founded a plan to help worthy men and women out of their money troubles. Breathlessly he told that he had written this man and showed his father the reply.

Eagerly Rev. McMurphy read every word of the great deeds this remarkable man is doing for other men and women. He read of the vast business of this big institution, scattered all over America—business so widespread that it is possible to help local men and women to end their money troubles for just looking after this business in full or spare time. "What a generous offer for anyone to make. And how easy and simple, too. The end of my financial worries," exclaimed Rev. McMurphy.

The possibilities seemed too good to be true. But he became convinced as he read letter after letter from other men and women, some saying that they made as high as \$35 and \$40 in a single day. And it must be true—this man surely must be sincere. For he won't even let anyone risk one penny buying anything. He just wants you to follow his simple plan.

"Why, daddy," said the boy, "even I can do this easy work. Let me try—please. Just loan me a few dollars to pay my expenses, daddy." Encouraged by the enthusiasm of this 9-year old child, he accepted this man's generous offer of help. But he also determined to allow this child to complete his wonderful lesson in courage and faith, so he let him go out alone on the first trip. The result was so amazing that his father wrote as follows:

"My little boy came back in about an hour with profits of nearly \$3.00. I thought, 'If this child can make that much, I can make twice that amount.' And I took up the work. I assure you I now have no fear of financial problems. The notes on the house have been burned and we have a nice car to ride around in. Last Saturday I went out after 2 o'clock, made \$30.00 and returned before sunset. If all the underpaid country preachers could learn what a great opportunity awaits them with you there would be more good cheer in preaching the gospel. I thank God for the day my little boy wrote you."

This thrilling true story of Rev. McMurphy is but an example of the many letters Mr. Van De Mark has received.

Now "Van" has openings for more women and men and actually offers to pay them cash for just saying 20 magic words to ladies. No need to sell anything to get this cash pay. This is the revolutionary new plan of this famous business genius who has already helped over 25,000 women and men toward ending their money troubles. "Conservative" business leaders called "Van" crazy for making this radical cash pay agreement. They said it would ruin "conservative" traditions. Cooler heads called it a master stroke and applauded "Van" for his great generosity. Now "Van" himself reveals the sensational truth. "Countless house-wives have learned that they can make great savings on our amazing bargain offers. So in almost no time the sale of our products has expanded almost to the bursting point. Now we must hurry and engage 1100 more local women and men to take care of regular customers. Big money for our workers means nothing to us now. I will not only pay you an actual cash penalty if your first 10 calls do not get you big money, but I allow you to make a handsome profit on every order my customers give you. To show you that I do things in a big way I will even send you \$13.00 worth (retail value) of my products to start you. Don't send a cent for this daring offer—just mail application below. If \$15.00 in a day will end your money worries, then rush the application. This generous offer will bring thousands of applications. If you delay it may be too late. This whole plan is so generous that people ask me how in the world I can afford to do it. But I believe in live and let live. We can't take our money with us when we go, so let there be happiness and prosperity spread all over this earth. Just be honest and fair with me, and I will help toward ending your money worries. Tell me how much you want—\$15 in a day for full time? \$3 in an hour for spare time? I will gladly send you my written cash pay agreement, legal and binding upon me." Curtis W. Van De Mark, Dept. 914-FF, Ninth and Sycamore Sts., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Curtis W. Van De Mark,
Dept. 914-F.F., Ninth and Sycamore Sts.,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

I hereby apply for the opening in my town to start on your new cash pay plan. Send your generous offer of \$13.00 worth (retail value) of your goods to start me. I risk nothing. This is not an order—send nothing C.O.D.

I want \$.....per hour.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needs for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate In The Munsey Combination

All-Story (Combined with Munsey) - - - - -
Arise - - - - -
Detective Fiction Weekly -
Minimum space four lines.

Combination line rate
\$3.00
less 2 per cent cash discount.

July 5th Classified Forms Close May 31st.

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UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY—\$100 WEEKLY SELLING BETTER QUALITY, ALL-WOOL, union-made-to-measure suits and topcoats at \$23.50 and \$31.50. Build big repeat business. Liberal bonus for producers. Large swatch samples FREE. W. Z. GIBSON, INC., 599 Throop, Dept. T-499, Chicago.

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NEW—Rubber Soles Cement on Instantly. Never Loosen. Outwears Leather, Waterproof. Sells fast. Test at my expense. EESTEVER CO., 269 Irving Park Sta., Chicago.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.45. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

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FREE SAMPLES. NO INVESTMENT, \$12.00 daily possible. Tablecloth washes like oilcloth. No laundering. JONES, 802 T North Clark, Chicago.

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PATENTS—Write for free guide book, "How To Obtain A Patent" and Record of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of inventions for Free Opinion whether it comes within Patent Office Rules. Easy Payments. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

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Someone who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-passenger, Advanced Six Nash Sedan or its full value in cash (\$2,000.00) and \$750.00 in cash for promptness. We are also giving away a Dodge Sedan, a Brunswick Phonograph and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash for advertising purposes to men, women and children who solve our puzzle and win our prizes. Over \$100,000 in Cash and Prizes already given! Mrs. Kate L. Needham won \$3,150.00; W. R. Eddington, \$3,050.00; Mrs. M. Iverson, \$2,230.00. This offer is guaranteed by a big reliable company with a reputation of many years of honest dealings, and is open to anyone living in the U. S. A. outside of Chicago.



Find the Twin Puppies

There are eight puppies in the picture. Two and only two are alike. See if you can find them. The rest are different either in their spots or in their ears. When you find the twins, write their numbers on a sheet of paper or postcard and send it to me right away with your name and address written plainly.

\$750.00 Extra for Promptness

In addition to the many valuable prizes and Hundreds of Dollars in Cash, we are also giving a Special Added Prize of \$750.00 Cash for Promptness to the winner of the Nash Sedan—making a total of \$2,750.00 in prizes or cash that you may win. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded each one tying. Solve the puzzle and send me your answer right away to qualify for an opportunity to share in the \$4,500.00 total Grand Prizes. EVERYBODY PROFITS. You may be the lucky first prize winner. It pays to be prompt.

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BLACKHEADS

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In Railway Traffic Inspection



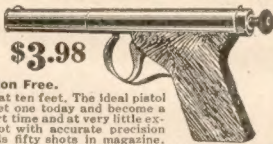
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STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 50, Buffalo, N. Y.

EARN UP TO \$250 per month SALARY

Fifty-Shot Target Practice Air Automatic



\$3.98

Box of Ammunition Free.

Guaranteed to hit a fly at ten feet. The ideal pistol for target practice. Get one today and become a good marksman in short time and at very little expense. Shoots buckshot with accurate precision and great force. Holds fifty shots in magazine. Easy to reload. Excellent for hunting birds, etc.

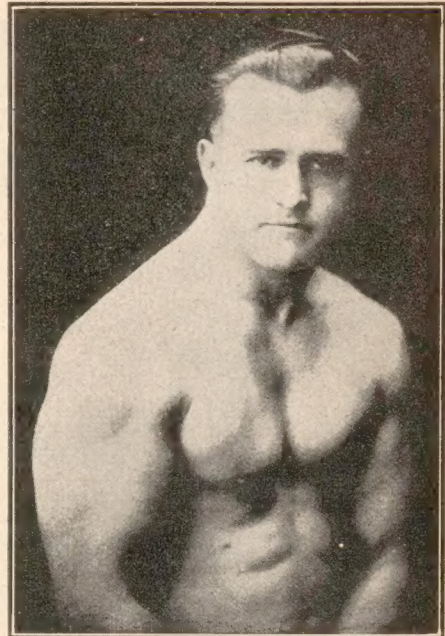
Looks like a real pistol. SEND NO MONEY. Pay on delivery \$3.98 plus small express charges.

JENKINS, Dept. F-94-W, 685 Broadway, New York

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W. J. KIRK, Pres., 3030 Morris Ave., Steubenville, O.



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Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," etc.

A New Body Awaits You

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And What Results

What a thrilling satisfaction you will get out of watching your shoulders broaden and your arms thicken and strengthen. How glorious it will be to feel your vest becoming tighter around your chest and to watch your legs become muscular. There'll be no more leg fatigue when you climb stairs and you'll be the one who sets the pace when walking.

You'll See It In Her Eyes

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Send for his New Book

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EARLE LIEDERMAN, Dept. 1106, 305 Broadway, New York City

EARLE LIEDERMAN

Dept. 1106, 305 Broadway, New York City.

Dear Sir:—Please send me, without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

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Street.....

City..... State.....

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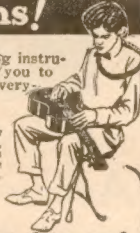
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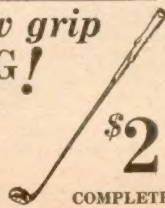
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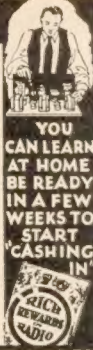
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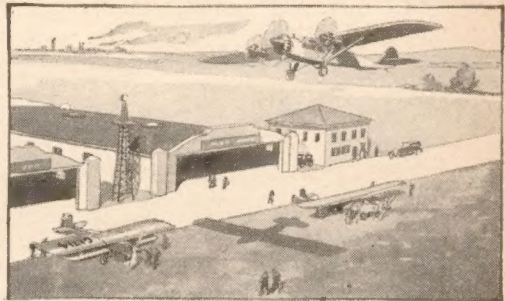
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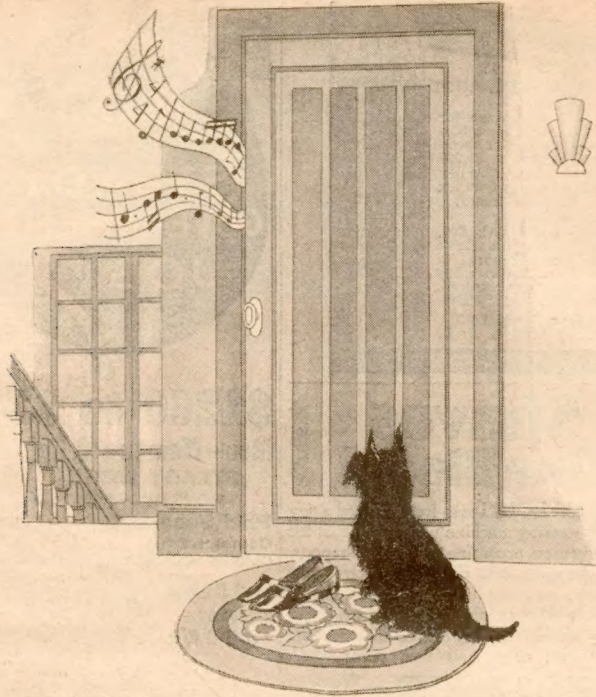
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SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 1930

NUMBER 6



The bird flew at them with uncanny persistence

The Radio Menace

When Boston's U. S. assistant district attorney disappeared, not even the investigators knew that this was the opening gun of a weird and secret invasion of America

By **RALPH MILNE FARLEY**

Author of "The Radio Gun Runners," "The Radio Flyers," etc.

FOREWORD

THE most important news stories never get onto the front page. For a number of years I have been keeping a scrapbook of obscure newspaper clippings about events which, little noted at the time, were to make history.

1 A

The collection starts with half a "stick"—paragraph—of filler from a newspaper of June 29, 1914, telling how some unimportant nobleman and his wife were shot by a crazy student in some never-before-heard-of city in the Balkans. Sarajevo, I think the name was. You've probably heard of the war to which it led.

721

Then there is the *Boston Post* clipping of July 1, 1919, telling of the mysterious disappearance of Myles Standish Cabot from his Back Bay radio laboratory. He turned up later on the planet Venus, as you doubtless recall.

And the clipping about the escaped lunatic from the Danvers asylum, terrorizing an electric plant in Lynn. It wasn't a lunatic at all, but rather that same Myles Cabot, transmitting himself back to earth by wireless.

And the clipping about two game-hunting young aviators being lost on the Greenland ice-cap in the spring of 1926. They were really Eric Redmond and Angus Selkirk of the Milwaukee *Eagle* polar expedition, and they weren't lost. They eventually discovered the north polar orifice, the existence of which science now admits.

And the clipping about Scarface Boston Jimmy quitting the bootleg racket in the spring of 1929, and moving out. He followed Eric and Angus to the land of the Vikings inside the earth, and shot up things quite badly there before he got through.

And then—but wait until you hear this one!

The *Boston Post* of June 3, 1931, contained the following item under date-line of Rockingham Junction, N. H.:

The B. & M. agent here reports seeing a large dragon as big as a horse, with leathery batlike wings, fly over the station at about five o'clock this morning. The agent had been to a lodge party the night before. It is reported that it was some party.

I saved this clipping for two reasons. First, because I used to cover Rockingham County myself for the *Post*, and used to receive twenty-five cents apiece for inventing fillers like

that. Secondly, because I am interested in pterodactyls and other prehistoric beasts.

But it was not until some time later that I added this clipping to my collection of obscure items about events which were afterward discovered to be epoch-making.

Nor does the world yet realize that that news-story is entitled to take its place with the assassination at Sarajevo. It is time that the world knew. Hence this account which I am now writing.

The flame which was kindled at Sarajevo required tens of millions of men to stamp it out.

Two men and a girl, with some assistance from a few friends, confronted the menace represented by that Rockingham Junction winged monster, which threatened the free existence of the whole human race. For a greater Kaiser than Wilhelm set out to dominate the world in 1931.

I NOTED only the one item at the time; and did not realize how many people throughout the United States thought they were seeing things until the *Literary Digest* compiled a collection of accounts of over four hundred separate similar apparitions. Congressmen Tinkham of Massachusetts and Schafer of Wisconsin promptly made this the text for a renewed demand for the repeal of the Volstead Act. Public interest was at last aroused. Seeing the dragon, usually in the early morning or at twilight, became the most popular outdoor sport.

The mythical beast was even reported to have been seen on the same evening at such widely separated points as Boston and San Francisco. This at first was scoffed at, until a leading professor of aerodynamics wrote a Sun-

day syndicate article, in which he proved, to his own satisfaction at least, that with the wing-spread claimed for the creature, it could easily have flown across the continent in the period represented between Eastern Standard Time and Pacific Standard Time.

Finally a certain circus king claimed to have killed the beast, and made considerable money by exhibiting its stuffed carcass at a dollar a head, children twenty-five cents. At this, every one came to believe that the whole matter had been a colossal hoax, for the mere purpose of laying the foundation for this very exhibit; that the showman had planted a few news-stories, and the contagion of mass imagination had supplied the rest. Popular interest suddenly lagged, and a new sensation took its place—for the public must at all times have its pet sensation. This was the remarkable increase in missing persons.

Then the missing persons were in turn forgotten—by all except their loved ones—and the front pages were given over to the next new sensation, whatever that may have been. I have forgotten.

CHAPTER I.

LARRY GETS A CLEW.

THE unexplained disappearance of Assistant United States Attorney Eliot Endicott from his office in the Federal Building, Boston, ought to have attracted more notice than it did. All that appeared in the press was a brief notice that young Endicott had left his bachelor apartment in the evening, had told the night clerk that he was bound for his office, and had not been seen since. It came just

too late to be featured as a part of the missing persons epidemic.

The Department of Justice did not give out the fact that Endicott had actually reached his office, accompanied by Operative Riley, his personal body-guard; had bolted the door on the inside, leaving Riley on guard in the hall; had been heard to call for help; and had totally disappeared while rescuers were battering down the door.

One reason why these facts were withheld was that they sounded preposterous, and the Department feared ridicule. Another and more vital reason was that the missing man had been engaged in a highly confidential investigation of the establishment and gradual development of a gang of super-intelligent criminals in Boston, and accordingly the Department did not wish this gang to realize what a haul they had made, or that the Department had any clews whatever as to what had become of the young assistant.

The Department did not wish the gang to know how many clews it had, and was equally unwilling to have the public know how few; for the clews were indeed nearly negligible.

On the evening of Eliot Endicott's disappearance, Lawrence Larrabee, a young reporter of the *Boston Post*, happened to be on his way from the newspaper office on Washington Street to the South Station, bound home for the night. It was dark and sultry. Heat lightning was playing in the distance. The streets were practically deserted.

"A fine night for a murder," thought Larry, "in which case I hope I get the scoop."

As he passed through Post Office Square, he thought he heard a leathery flapping overhead. Involuntarily, he looked up. The lightning flickered, and

he thought he saw outlined the huge shape of a pterodactyl winging through the night.

"Too bad the flying dragon is no longer news," he said to himself. "This would have made a good story a few months ago. I wonder if the beast was stealing any mail. Guess I'll go into the Federal Building and find out if any one else saw him. Perhaps I can make up a story out of it after all."

So he turned and mounted the steps. He had followed pure hunches before, and they had led to news.

Downstairs the building was deserted, but he heard an air-hammer at work on the second floor. Following the sound, he found Operative Riley, several policemen, the night watchman, and the wrecking crew engaged in breaking into Eliot Endicott's office. The door-frame crashed inward just as he arrived. The rescuers rushed in, and Larry followed them. But the room was empty.

"Gone!" exclaimed Riley. "Mr. Endicott is gone! He was here a minute ago. He hollered for help. We broke down the door, and now he's gone!"

The office seemed normal except for the absence of the assistant district attorney.

Here was a story, a whale of a story! Young Larrabee got all the details from Riley, then hastened back to the city room of the *Post*. He hunted through the filed clippings which newspaper men call the "morgue" to write up a full biography of the victim. But he carefully omitted all mention of the flying dragon; he would save that for later. Turning his story in to the night editor, he sped back to the Federal Building.

Nothing further had developed.

Riley and a squad of police and Secret Service operatives were on guard. So Larry chummed around with them, smoked innumerable cigarettes, and waited.

ALONG toward morning, newsboys began crying their papers in the streets below. Larry bought one of each variety. The *Herald* and the *Globe* had merely a brief paragraph, announcing Eliot Endicott's disappearance. Then the *Post* appeared.

Larrabee's story was not on the front page. That was strange! Feverishly he thumbed the sheets looking for it, and at last found—not his story, but rather merely the same brief item as had come out in the *Herald* and the *Globe*.

Suppressed! That was what had happened. His great scoop had been suppressed. For a moment he was horribly disappointed, and then he was glad.

He made up his mind to follow out his hunch about the pterodactyl. His paper was the only one to have any information, any clues so far. The scoop would be all the greater, if and when he succeeded in locating the missing assistant district attorney.

Shortly after sunrise the district attorney arrived, visibly agitated. So agitated, in fact, that he didn't notice Larry's presence.

Striding into the room, the official glanced quickly around. Then he asked Riley for a full report, taking notes as Riley explained. Larry also scribbled on the back of an envelope what few points had been omitted before.

When the interrogation had been completed, the district attorney put his hand under the edge of the desk of his missing assistant, and pushed something. Then he walked over to one of

the bookcases which lined the walls of the room and tugged at it. It swung forward, showing a cavity behind; in this cavity were the steel doors of a large wall safe.

It was now broad daylight. The inevitable pigeons which infest the ledges of every down town building in Boston were parading up and down, preening themselves in the morning sunshine, and chattering; "Look—look—look—at a coo! Look—look—look—at a coo!" to each other. Morning had come.

"Those infernal birds will drive me crazy," muttered the district attorney, as he twirled the knobs of the safe.

So Riley went to the window and shooed them away. They circled with much flapping and returned.

The doors of the safe opened at last, and the district attorney pounced on a small red leatherboard packet bound with tape.

"It's here!" he exclaimed. "They didn't get it, after all!"

Extricating the package, he flung it down on the desk.

"Watch that!" he admonished the operative. "I'll see if there's anything missing."

As he returned to the safe and knelt before it, one of the pigeons flew in the window, and straight at Riley's face. Riley beat it away, but it came at him again and again, pecking at his eyes, driving him back into a corner. The policeman and other operatives rushed to the poor Irishman's assistance. The packet on the desk lay unguarded. The district attorney rose to his feet, and turned to see what was the matter.

At that instant another pigeon swooped in through the window, seized the packet in its beak, and swooped out again. The district attorney rushed to the window and hurled a law book

after the departing bird which promptly dropped its precious burden and soared away.

Larry followed the official to the window. They both leaned far out. A short thick-set man, with a cap pulled low over his face, was pacing up and down on the sidewalk below. As the red packet thumped upon the concrete, this man snatched it up, and jumped into an auto which was standing beside the curb, with its engine running. The car promptly sped off with its prize.

"After them!" shouted the district attorney. "They've got Mr. Endicott's secret report."

The bird which had been attacking Riley now soared out and joined its mate.

Every one rushed to the street. But it was too late. Not a sign of the departing car. Police headquarters were promptly notified by phone, but no one was able to give an adequate description of either the thieves or their auto.

WHEN all the excitement had finally quieted down, the district attorney noticed Larrabee.

"Who are you?" he bellowed.

"Reporter for the *Boston Post*, sir," Larry explained, exhibiting his badge.

"What the devil are you doing here?"

"Getting the story, of course."

"Hey, one of you cops, take this bird into custody. He may be mixed up in this."

So, despite Larry's protests, he was manacled and marched off to the police station. An hour or so later, however, he was released, and ordered to report at once to his boss.

The editor received the reporter in his sanctum, and carefully closed the door.

"Well, Larry," said he, "you got a good scoop. I've read it. I'm sorry that the night editor had to kill it; but we've promised to coöperate with the department, as you've probably guessed. Now I understand from the district attorney that you've gone and got a lot more information that you ought not to have. Good boy! Of course, I'll have to kill that, too, but they can't keep it suppressed forever. Now, tell me the whole story."

So Larrabee told him everything, not omitting even the pterodactyl nor the two pigeons.

When he had finished, the editor remarked, "It sounds perfectly crazy. No wonder the authorities are leery about its appearing in print. I take it that you have a hunch that the winged dragon flew off with young Endicott?"

"I can't believe it—but I think that's it."

"Well, none of the other papers appear to be in on the story at all. Have you any plans for running down your clues?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Go and get it. I've followed your hunches before. Sometimes they're positively uncanny. Go up to the city room, take your typewriter, and write out all that you know, and what you plan to do. Seal it up and bring it to me. Then go and get that story! I hope you scoop the authorities as well as the other papers."

"Yes, sir."

Later in the morning, Lawrence Larrabee handed his chief a sealed envelope.

"Where now?" asked the editor.

"I'd rather not say it aloud," replied the reporter. "There's a pigeon on your window ledge, and he might overhear me."

The editor guffawed.

"This thing seems to be getting on your nerves," said he. Then, sobering, "And yet I don't know but what you are right. Follow your hunch to the end, Larry. Go and get it."

The pigeon cocked its head on one side, just as if it were listening, and then soared off down Washington Street.

Larrabee hastened to the North Station, where he purchased a ticket to Rockingham Junction, N. H. He was going there first, because he had ascertained from the files of his newspaper that that was where the winged monster had made its initial appearance that spring.

A man stood behind him in the waiting line at the ticket window. This man also bought a ticket to Rockingham Junction and followed Larry onto the train.

Later that morning both of them got off at the junction. It had been Larry's plan to interview the station agent, who was reported to have been the first to see the pterodactyl, but the other man beat him to the window.

Larry hung around until the other had transacted his business. Then he in turn approached the window, while the other retired to one of the waiting room seats and furtively watched him.

The station agent was seated at the telegraph instruments, so the young reporter leaned against the counter waiting, and idly turning over in his mind how to broach the matter to the agent, who quite likely had been kidded about the dragon until he was very touchy on the subject.

As Larry waited, he suddenly heard his own name—slightly misspelled, it is true—ticked off by the agent. Telegraphy happened to be one of his accomplishments; used to cover sporting events. Instantly he was all alert.

The agent finished sending, and closed the switch. Back came the repeat from the other end: "Washington Jones, Intervale, N. H. Reporter named Laraby here on King's trail. Send reëforcements quick. Jackson."

"Aha!" said the newspaper man to himself. "So I'm shadowed, am I? Well, I guess that means I'm hot on the trail!"

Then to the station agent, as the latter approached the window, "A time-table, please."

LARRY perused the time-table. Then, his plans made up, he went outside and hailed a taxi. The man who had been following him promptly got into a green taxi next in line.

"About three miles out the Exeter road," announced the reporter in a loud voice, then leaning forward he spoke quietly in the driver's ear: "I'm being shadowed. Can you shake that other car?"

"Can I, eh?" replied the taxi man. "You're on, buddy. Just watch me."

In a few moments they drew up in front of his company's garage. The green cab drew up just behind them.

Larry's driver turned around and shouted at him through the glass partition, "Sorry, sir, but the ignition's loose again. And we haven't another car. Would you mind waiting until I fix it? It'll only take a minute or two."

"All right. All right," Larry shouted back, with mock testiness. "Only please hurry."

So the driver honked, the garage doors swung open, and they drove in.

"Quick, buddy, this way," commanded the taxi man. "I've another car in the alley back of the garage."

And soon they were hurrying to the station again, while the man who had been following him sat patiently in the

green taxi outside the garage, watching through a window the top of the taxi inside, to make sure they didn't leave. And with his meter running!

Larry rewarded his friend with a five-dollar bill, and bought a ticket to Boston, inquiring ostentatiously about the time of departure and arrival of the train, its accommodations, and so forth. Then he went out onto the platform.

The train for Boston arrived and left. The northbound limited stopped for water and went on again. A worried-looking man dashed into the station and up to the window.

"Say," he blurted out, "was there a young fellow in a dark blue suit here just now?"

"I'll say there was!" replied the agent. "He talked me deaf, dumb and blind about the accommodations to Boston."

"Where is he now?" asked the other eagerly.

"On his way to Boston, I guess," replied the agent. "He bought a ticket for there, and got onto the train. There is another in twenty minutes, to save you from asking."

"Then take this wire," said the man, and he hurriedly wrote out, "Washington Jones, Intervale, N. H. Never mind Laraby. He give me the slip back to Boston. Jackson."

"That's two words 'extra,'" remarked the agent with New England thrift.

"Hell!" replied the man. "What do I care!"

Meanwhile Lawrence Larrabee was settling himself comfortably in the northbound limited, *en route* for Intervale, New Hampshire. There must be something to his hunch, after all, for how could that man have happened to follow him, unless the pigeon out-

side the window of the editor of the *Post* had actually overheard, and had told on him? Of course, he had taken great care not to say where he was going; but if the pigeon had even overheard him say that he was on the trail of Eliot Endicott, that might account for this man following him. And if pigeons could act human—a fantastic theory that was strongly borne out by the actions of the two that had stolen the packet from the Federal Building—then might not the pterodactyl be human too, and in cahoots with whoever had made away with Eliot Endicott?

At this point he was diverted from his thoughts by noticing the girl across the aisle. A pippin! Larry promptly forgot all about his quest. Here was the neatest thing in skirts that he had ever seen. Promptly he resolved to make this young lady's acquaintance at the earliest possible moment. He noticed particularly that there was no ring on the important finger.

But his hopes were dashed by the arrival, from another car, of a stern and forbidding male parent. A distinguished-looking gentleman at that, gray-haired, black-mustached and courtly.

Larry was no mean detective. His career on the *Boston Post*, including his work on the present case, had demonstrated that. Now he planned to devote his talents to discovering the identity of the beautiful girl.

He listened intently to her conversation with her father, in the hope of hearing some clew, but all that he learned was that the girl's name appeared to be "Helen." There was a "K" on one of their bags, and another bag bore a tag, which, however, was turned blank side up.

When father and daughter went to

the diner, Larry pounced on this tag, and turned it over; but it was blank on the other side, too. Then he followed them into the diner, but was unable to get a seat near them.

When they all returned to the parlor car, he heard them mention "Bartlett." Was that a station or a man's name? He felt a twinge of jealousy, until he had looked it up in his time-table and found that it was the name of a station just beyond Intervale.

At Portland they all changed trains. The girl and her father took the same train that Larry did, namely the Maine Central for Intervale and Bartlett.

WHEN the train stopped at Intervale, Larry's destination, he stayed on, and got off with the pair at Bartlett. The criminals and their pet pterodactyl could wait; he had more important business on hand just now. At that, it might after all be well for him to leave the train at some other station than Intervale, and so divert suspicion from himself. Thus he kidded himself into believing that his duty coincided with his pleasure.

It was quite late in the evening when the train reached Bartlett, and somehow he lost the girl and her father in the crowd at the station, nor did any one of whom he inquired seem to recognize the pair from his description of them.

So he put up at a hotel for the night, registering as "John O'Brien," as his real name and the fact that he was on the trail of the missing attorney were known to the latter's abductors.

All the next day he spent wandering around the town in the hope of catching a glimpse of his fair quarry. It was not until late in the afternoon that his patience was rewarded, for he saw her enter the post office.

As he followed her in he heard the postmaster say to her, "Here's a letter for you. It was addressed to the lumber camp, but I guess it's for you, all right."

The girl tore it open, threw the envelope in the wastebasket, and started to read the letter. Then gasped and staggered backward, clutching a desk for support. It looked as though she were going to faint.

Larry's first impulse was to spring to her assistance. But his agile mind quickly realized that, unless she actually fainted, such an action on his part would be likely to bar forever any chance which he might have of acquaintance with the young lady. So while she gasped and clung to the edge of the desk with the hand which held the letter, he stepped forward as though hunting for a pen, and read rapidly the contents of the letter thus displayed before him.

What he read caused him to gasp, too. But with an effort he steadied himself. The girl by this time had recovered her composure. She carefully reread the letter; then folded it, stuffed it in one of her pockets, and hurried out of the building.

Larry retrieved her envelope from the wastebasket, glanced at it quickly, thrust it into his pocket and approached the delivery window.

"That was Miss Helyn Kent, wasn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the postmaster guardedly.

"I thought I recognized her," Larry continued. "An old friend of mine. Haven't seen her for several years. But she didn't seem to recognize me. What's she doing up here?"

"Staying at the Mortons'," was the reply. "You know the Morton camp? Well, she and her dad take the camp

for a few weeks 'most every summer, while the Mortons themselves are away."

"Then it's me for the Mortons'!" announced Larry jubilantly.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIANT BEAST.

MEANWHILE the missing assistant district attorney, whom Larry had set out to find, was becoming the storm center of this gigantic world-menace which is about to be related.

Eliot Endicott was only recently out of Harvard Law School, where he had stood nearly at the head of his class. While in the school he had been one of the most active organizers of the Intercollegiate Republican League, in recognition of which activity he had landed the assistant district attorneyship almost immediately upon graduation. As he was possessed of a keen, inquiring and analytical mind, the district attorney finally assigned to him the investigation of the clever criminal band whose activities were worrying New England.

The records of the investigation he kept in his office, which was amply reinforced against robbery.

The windows had burglar-proof catches, and were also wired to a burglar-alarm system, so contrived that if any window were opened, except during regular office-hours, a gong would ring in the corridor of the building, and a light would flash both in the office of the burglar-alarm company and also at city police headquarters.

To cut the wires of the system, for the purpose of preventing the sounding of the alarm, would have exactly

the opposite effect, and would sound it at once, for it was a break circuit rather than a make circuit. To render assurance doubly sure, in case the apparatus should get out of order, all messages were also transmitted, both to police headquarters and to the burglar-patrol company, from a radio set within the room.

Inside the windows there were heavy steel shutters with Yale locks:

The door was reënforced with steel, and hitched up to the same system as the windows, but with one exception, namely, that although the window-alarm could be switched off from within the room, the door-alarm could only be switched off at company headquarters after a visit from an inspector. This requirement of a visit from an inspector was an additional precaution, to make sure that whoever opened the door was an authorized person.

Even when the burglar-alarm company was notified that Endicott himself was on the way to his office, they nevertheless sent over the inspector, lest some one else might reach the office first and impersonate Endicott.

In addition to this system, Endicott was personally guarded with the utmost care. Everywhere he went he was accompanied by an operative of the Department of Justice and was shadowed by still other operatives.

On the evening in question he entered the Federal Building in the company of Operative Riley and an inspector from the burglar-alarm company whom he had brought along for the speedy turning off of the alarm. On the way up to his office on the second floor he spoke to the night watchman and to the foreman of the night wrecking-crew, which were engaged in the remodeling of part of the building.

Of course, when he unlocked and

opened his door, the gong in the corridor set up a tremendous clatter which reverberated ominously through the empty building, and did not cease when he entered and closed the door from the inside. The inspector then hurried back to his company to turn off the gong, and Riley placed himself on guard just outside the door.

Endicott bolted the door on the inside. He then switched on the lights, switched off the window burglar-alarm, unlocked the steel shutters, and unlatched the windows, opening them wide to let some air into the stuffy office, for the season was summer. While he was doing this, the clatter of the gong outside his door ceased, thus indicating that the inspector had returned to the company. The young attorney heard a policeman arrive, receive Riley's report that everything was O. K., and depart.

AS Endicott flung open the last window, a man who had been crouching on the sill outside leaped in upon him. The intruder had the advantage of being thoroughly prepared and rehearsed. Endicott being taken by surprise, was forced backward by the onslaught; and before he could recover his balance, the intruder had seized Endicott's coat by the lapels, and had pulled it down off his shoulders, pinioning his upper arms.

At first the young attorney was too startled to call for help. Then, as he collected his senses, he realized that calling for help would do no good, for the office door was bolted on the inside. So he might just as well devote his attentions to his assailant, and leave the faithful Riley out of consideration for the present.

For a moment the two men stared into each other's faces. Endicott stud-

ied his captor. The man was thick-set, almost apelike in his proportions, with long gangling arms, red hair, and a pugilistic face dotted with freckles. His features, especially his eyes, were indescribably non-human.

Eliot Endicott, although rather slightly built, was hard as nails, and had in fact at one time held the college championship in catch-as-catch-can wrestling. He knew that when one's arms are pinioned by one's coat in the manner in which the red-headed intruder now held him, there is only a single possible way to get free, and that the chances are very strongly against even that way succeeding unless the enemy is taken completely by surprise. That way consists in violently throwing one's hands in a circle: outward, upward, inward and downward. This gets one's coat back on, and one's assailant's hands off, at the same time. So he kicked the red-headed ape-man suddenly in the shins to divert his attention, and then rapidly executed the above-described movement.

The movement wrenched the man's hands from Endicott's lapels, Endicott's coat slid properly back onto his shoulders once more, and his fists drove square at the face of the red-head.

Evidently the red-head was not the pugilist which he looked, for he neither ducked nor warded off the blow. Instead he took it on the point of the jaw, and dropped to the floor without a sound.

"One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten," counted the official, grinning broadly, in spite of the rather mashed condition of his knuckles. "Oh, Riley!"

"Yes, sir," came the operative's voice from outside the door. "What's the trouble?"

"No trouble at all, Riley. Merely that I've caught a robber in my office. Just a minute, while I unbolt the door, and you can come in and help me truss him up."

But as Endicott walked toward the door, a voice behind him said in a low but peremptory tone, "Halt! Halt, or I fire!"

Endicott had served in the National Guard. He knew a military command when he heard one. He halted.

"Now stick 'em up!"

Promptly he raised his hands aloft. "I'm sorry," continued the voice, "but you'll have to stand just like that until Red comes out of his trance, unless the King takes it into his head to go back and bring another man, which isn't likely. Your *second* serious mistake, Eliot, was in not remembering that rattlesnakes hunt in pairs. You may recall that the snake-man of the New York zoo, after a lifetime of experience, died a couple of years ago in the New Jersey mountains, due to that same error."

"And my *first* mistake?" asked Endicott coolly, still holding his hands aloft. "What was that?"

"That," laughed the voice, "was in bolting your office door on the inside."

As if to emphasize the point, Riley began pounding on the outside of the door, and calling, "Are you all right, sir?"

"Better tell him yes," admonished the voice quietly.

"Yes, Riley," replied Endicott hurriedly. "The robber is still out cold, and I'll get to the door in a moment, unless he receives reënforcements."

"Careful," cautioned the voice.

Red groaned and blinked his eyes.

"Red," commanded the voice, "snap out of it! What did he do to you?"

"Dunno," said Red stupidly, feeling of his jaw.

"I slugged him, right on the button," explained Endicott, rather proudly.

With a snarl, Red sprang to his feet and rushed him. As they grappled, Endicott got a glimpse at the other intruder, the owner of the voice. He was a young man of just about Endicott's age. His build was slightly heavier, but not so athletic. His face was Semitic, rather attractive, and certainly strong and intellectual. In his hand was an automatic. He had the pleasing personality of the typical English Jew. And his captive almost liked him in spite of the situation. There was something strangely familiar about him, too.

Even as Endicott took all this in, he realized that the gun-wielder didn't dare to fire for fear of hitting Red; so the attorney started shouting to his faithful Riley for help.

"Cut that out, or I'll drill both of you," commanded the voice. "Let go of him, Red, or you'll stop a ton of lead."

The two broke and separated.

Riley pounded on the door outside. Then, "Hold out! I'll have help in a minute!" and the pounding ceased.

"YOU see, as I have already told you, you shouldn't have bolted the door," deprecated the man with the automatic. Then, turning to his henchman, "Red, I'm ashamed of you. Why be so vengeful? You may have a new-soul, and I may not, but you sometimes act in the most unsoulful manner. Here, truss this fellow up."

Going to the window, he produced from the ledge a coil of rope which he tossed to Red, who clumsily but ef-

fectively bound their angry captive and placed him in a chair.

"And now," inquired the other, seating himself on the desk and pocketing the gun, "Where are those papers?"

"What papers?" temporized Endicott.

"Cigarette papers!" replied the other scornfully. "Don't be silly. Come, be quick about it. You know as well as I do what I'm here for. I want the manuscript of that epochal crime-report which you are writing."

"Oh, that!" Endicott continued to temporize. "That isn't here."

"Where is it then?" snapped the other. "Quick. We haven't much time."

"I'd rather not tell," said Endicott, smiling in spite of his bonds, which Red had spitefully tied unnecessarily tight.

"There are ways of making you tell," announced his captor menacingly.

But just then there came the sound of an air-hammer on the outside of the door-casing. Riley had returned with some of the workmen.

"Hell!" ejaculated the man with the gun, jumping down off the desk. Deftly he slipped a gag between Endicott's teeth, and a handkerchief across his eyes, and commanded, "To the window with him, Red. The King is still there."

So the captive was rushed to the window, and was slid out onto the ledge, wondering what means of escape they could use. But his thoughts were cut short by a pair of grappling hooks snatching him around the waist and swinging him off into space. With a slightly jerky motion, he was carried through the air for five or ten minutes, and then was deposited on what was evidently another window

ledge, where hands seized him and slid him into a room.

For nearly half an hour he lay neglected on the floor. At last he heard the voice of his abductor and the closing of shutters. Then he was lifted to a chair and his gag and bandage were removed.

He was in a small office. His captor was smiling down at him in a friendly and ingratiating manner. Red and several other men, equally rough types and all equally unhuman, were in the room.

And a creature! Endicott gasped and recoiled as his gaze fell on the creature.

It was indescribable. A slate-colored bat-winged lizard, squatting on the floor with its head towering above the standing men. And that head. A narrow pointed beak four feet long, balanced by a kingfisher crest of about the same length, the whole being mounted on a long wrinkled neck, bent like that of a heron. Eyes, lidless and unblinking. The folded leathery wings protruded backward from its forepaws across its shoulders, like two swords carried on parade. Their spread would be nearly thirty feet when open.

"So it's true?" gasped the captive.

"What's true?" replied his abductor.

"All these newspaper yarns about the pterodactyl."

"They're mainly true all right, but unfortunate. The King at first was a bit incautious in showing himself; and once the story was given a good start, it didn't matter whether he showed himself or not, the people kept right on imagining that they saw him. Fortunately, however, that Philadelphia showman played right into our hands by concocting a fake pterodactyl for exhibition purposes; and now everybody believes that there never

was a real one, which is lucky for us. I'll venture to bet that, with all your cleverness, your investigations never suggested to you that the pterodactyl had any connection with this 'gang of master minds' of ours—to use the popular expression. How little people guess!"

"Has he any connection?" countered Endicott, eagerly.

"We shall let you judge of that when you become one of us," was the surprising answer. "And now," continued his captor, "I shall introduce myself. Don't you remember your undergraduate classmate, Aaron Cohen?"

"I thought you looked familiar," exclaimed Endicott. "May I ask you why I am your prisoner?"

"Not our prisoner," deprecated Cohen, "but rather our honored guest. You have been elected to membership in our organization, and this is your initiation."

"And if I decline the honor?"

"You won't," laughed Cohen. "No one ever does. Dr. Chapin attends to that. And now I am going to have you untied. I want you to make yourself at home here, while I get the laboratory ready for you. There are magazines on the table. It may take me as much as an hour."

"YOUR mention of a 'laboratory' sounds ominous," said Endicott. "Would you mind telling me what sort of an experiment you are planning to try on me?"

"No experiment at all," replied Cohen. "We're merely going to transmit you by wireless to the headquarters of our organization."

"You're kidding me, aren't you?"

Cohen studied him intently for a moment, and finally said, a bit tri-

umphantly, "Well, you're supposed to be intelligent, you graduated at the head of our class at Harvard, you were prominent in Law School, you pose as an amateur detective, and you've been making an intensive study of our organization. Yet you haven't the slightest inkling of how far we have progressed scientifically ahead of the rest of the world. Does that answer your question?"

"I'll have to be shown," replied Endicott guardedly.

"Perhaps you wonder," continued his classmate, "just why I gave up my attempt to get you to tell where your report is hidden. That may come later, but for the present we have decided to send a couple of pigeons to watch what is done when your rescuers break into your office."

"Stool pigeons, you mean?" interrupted Endicott.

"No, just ordinary pigeons," continued Cohen, "the kind one feeds with peanuts on Boston Common. Only these particular pigeons are members of our organization. They have new-souls just like the King here, and the rest of us. You see, I am being very frank with you, for you are soon to become one of us. Now make yourself at home, while I go to the laboratory. Boris and Frank, you two watch Mr. Endicott. Don't bother him, unless he makes a noise, opens a window, tries to leave the room, or attacks either of you; in any of which cases shoot him and shoot to kill."

So saying, he and the pterodactyl and all but two of the men left the room.

The prisoner picked up a magazine, and turned its pages aimlessly for a few moments, his mind dulled by his predicament. The two gunmen watched him with expressionless animal faces.

Then Eliot Endicott suddenly had an idea. He searched through his pockets, and found a stamped envelope and some blank paper. As the two guards did not appear to be paying any particular attention to what he was doing, he hurriedly addressed the envelope to his girl cousin, Miss Helyn Kent, Charlesgate Apartments, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He picked her out because she was clever and discreet; furthermore a letter addressed to a girl was likely to attract less attention than one addressed to the authorities. On one of the sheets of paper he wrote:

DEAR HELYN:

The criminals whom I have been trailing have got me at last. The pterodactyl, which the newspapers were so full of this spring, is real; and he is one of the gang. He flew with me from my office window to some other office building, where they are now planning to send me by radio, from a laboratory elsewhere in this building to their headquarters, wherever that may be. This all sounds perfectly crazy, but don't waste any sympathy on my mental condition; save it for what these superminds may do to me.

The leader of the outfit appears to be Aaron Cohen, an old classmate of mine. Also he has mentioned a Dr. Chapin as being one of them. This is all that I know.

If I succeed in mailing this letter, the substation postmark may give some clue as to what part of the city this building is in. I judge that the building has wireless masts because of Cohen's mention of radio. I can see through the frosted glass door panels that this is room 715. There is no name on the door.

Get this letter to the district attorney.

In haste and with love,

ELIOT.

He folded up the paper, put it in the envelope and slipped the latter into one

of his pockets. So far, so good. Now to find some opportunity for mailing it. If worse came to worst, he could just drop it somewhere, and trust that the finder would deposit it in a mailbox.

Those stupid gunmen! With dull animal eyes, they had watched him write the letter, and had not interfered, nor even investigated what he was doing. They had received detailed instructions from Cohen just what to prevent the prisoner from doing, and as writing was not among the things prohibited, they had let him write. They seemed doped or hypnotized, curiously unhuman.

Very much pleased with himself, he picked up a magazine and tried to read. He felt instinctively that he ought to be nonchalant. Now that he had done all that could be done for the present, he ought calmly to become absorbed in a story. That was the way the hero would do in a Sax Rohmer Oriental mystery movie, and Eliot Endicott had considerable of the theatrical in his make-up.

But his mind refused to concentrate on the printed page in front of him. He cursed himself for his carelessness in letting himself get trapped; he wondered whether these clever outlaws would be able to find the manuscript of his voluminous report in his office; he speculated on the presence of his classmate Aaron Cohen as a prominent member of this band of criminals, and on the human intelligence of the huge pterodactyl and of "the pigeons with souls" whom Cohen had mentioned; he wondered if it were really possible to transmit persons through space, or whether this was but a euphemism for some other diabolical performance, electrocution for instance. And Helyn! Would she get his letter?

Would she miss him and worry about him?

HE was absorbed in these thoughts when Aaron Cohen reentered the room and announced, "All is ready. Follow me. Boris and Frank will follow you, and will shoot if you try to pull anything."

So saying, he led the way into the corridor of the office building. Eliot Endicott kept his eyes alert for clues, such as names on doors, or posted notices, giving the name of the building or its owners. But the building appeared to be a new one; every door was unlabeled. The assistant district attorney did not recognize the corridor as one that he had ever seen before in his life.

As they passed the elevators, he edged over near the mail-chute, with the precious letter palmed in his right hand.

But Cohen turned and saw him, as he raised that hand toward the chute.

"None of that!" snapped his young captor, then laughed and added, "Oh, go ahead and ring the button, if it amuses you. The elevators aren't running this time of night, so no one will answer you."

He grinned tauntingly, turned away again, and continued on his way down the hall.

Quick as a flash, Eliot Endicott slipped the letter into the chute.

Boris and Frank offered no objection. Had they not heard their boss tell the prisoner to go ahead with what he was doing?

This was the letter which Lawrence Larrabee read over Helyn Kent's shoulder in the Bartlett Post Office, although neither of them knew then how the missive happened to reach Bartlett so promptly, inasmuch as its orig-

inal address in Endicott's hand was Cambridge, Massachusetts.

CHAPTER III.

SUPERSCIENTIFIC POWERS.

JUST beyond the elevators, they entered a room labeled: "708. Radio Laboratories." Too bad he couldn't have got that information into his letter to Helyn, but it was now too late. Nevertheless, the searchers would be looking for such a laboratory in the vicinity of an unlabeled room numbered 715. Every little bit would help.

So Eliot Endicott was feeling quite hopeful as he entered the laboratory behind Aaron Cohen, and followed by the two gunmen, Boris and Frank. Inside he found the pterodactyl, the rest of the gunmen, and one new person, bearded, bespectacled and sinister, dressed in a buff-colored smock.

Cohen introduced him as, "Dr. Wladimir Polakowski, my laboratory assistant."

The room was crowded with electrical equipment, including a motor-generator set, some large Tesla coils, a Cooper-Hewitt mercury interrupter, and a complicated switch-panel. In one corner was a curtained cubicle, about six feet each way.

Dr. Polakowski stepped briskly over to the cubicle, and pulled back the front curtain, disclosing an interior absolutely barren, except for three metal rods which met at one of the upper rear corners, from which point they projected at right angles to each other, one straight down to the floor, and the other two in two horizontal directions. They were of some unfamiliar metal which looked like a very pale brass with a slight iridescent greenish tinge.

"The coördinate axes of our mat-

ter-transmitting set," explained Cohen. "I'll show you how it works."

He clicked several times to the dragon, who lumbered into the cubicle, and squatted there as compactly as possible. Cohen and Dr. Polakowski walked carefully around the beast tucking in protruding portions of its anatomy, especially its wing-tips, in order to make sure that nothing projected beyond the coördinate axes.

"We have to be very careful," explained Cohen. "It would be tragic if any part of him got left behind."

Then he stepped over to the panel, adjusted a telephone headset to his head, and grasped two of the switches. Dr. Polakowski took one last careful look at the pterodactyl, then pulled the curtain closed.

"O. K., chief," he announced.

"Stand by to receive," spoke Cohen into the transmitter.

"All ready," came faintly from his earphones.

So he threw the two switches. There came a blinding flash and a strong smell of ozone.

"One, two, three, four," counted Cohen, with his eye on a watch, then restored the switches to neutral. "All right, doctor. All over."

Polakowski opened the curtains. The cubicle was empty.

But Eliot Endicott refused to be impressed.

"Old stuff!" he snorted. "I've seen that done on the stage."

Aaron Cohen sighed. He was determined to impress his erstwhile classmate. "Well, I'll even take a chance on one of these hunkies with the curtain open. Come on, Red."

The gunman thus addressed shrugged his shoulders, and picking up a steel chair, entered the cubicle with it, and sat down.

"Watch closely, Eliot," announced Cohen; then into the telephone, "Stand by to receive again."

"All ready," buzzed the earphones.

So the switches were thrown once more, and once more came the flash and the ozone.

"One, two, three, four," counted Cohen.

Endicott stared at the seated thug in the cubicle. As the switches were thrown, an opaque mist seemed to spring from the three coördinate axes, enveloping Red and the chair in a cube of pearly liquid fire. Then as the "one, two, three, four" were counted off, the man dissolved and disappeared, leaving only the chair and an automatic pistol, which appeared suddenly in the vicinity of one of Red's pockets, and clattered to the floor.

"Where is he?" gasped Endicott.

"Headquarters by now," replied Cohen laconically.

"But why did the chair and the pistol stay behind?"

"Because they are metal," explained the other. "For some as yet unexplained reason, this apparatus won't transmit metals. The darn fool took the wrong chair. He'll get an awful bump when he lands up in New Hampshire."

So that was where the headquarters was, somewhere in New Hampshire. Too bad there were no more envelopes. This was an important clew.

To divert Cohen's attention from this slip, Endicott hastily inquired, "But there's lots of iron, and phosphorus, and other metals in the human anatomy. Why don't these get left behind, too?"

"Because they exist in the form of metallic salts. This machine will transmit metallic salts, although not metals. Your turn next, Eliot; and take a wooden chair, if you don't want a

bump. Oh, by the way, you had better leave your watch, and pocket-knife, and garters, and jewelry, and so forth, outside. They will be mailed to you. The machine wouldn't do them any good. Look at Red's gat there: the rubber handle-grips, the grease, and the powder from the cartridges have gone with him, and the rest of the gun is here. When you go, all your tooth-fillings will remain here. But we maintain a special dental clinic at headquarters, for just that purpose."

Dr. Polakowski removed the steel chair and the gat, and obligingly placed a wooden chair in the cubicle; and Eliot Endicott sat down on it, not without considerable misgivings.

HE looked around him for some means of escape, but saw none.

He became frantic with terror of the unknown. Had he not just seen the gunman, Red, dissolve into nothing? Now it was about to happen to him.

More for the purpose of stalling for time, than because of any scientific inquisitiveness, Eliot hurriedly said, "Just a minute, Aaron! How can you be sure that some one else will not tune in on this station, and receive a part of me—all mixed up with a bedtime story?" He laughed nervously at his grim humor.

Cohen smiled indulgently. As there was no chance for Eliot to escape, he might just as well humor the attorney.

"There is not a chance in the world. We use a compound wave-length, very similar to that employed in the Hammond torpedo-control. That is to say, we send simultaneously each of the three dimensions on five interrelated wave-lengths, each from a different one of five aërials. Each of our stations picks up on five aërials. When

both the sending and the receiving sets are properly tuned, there is no other possible combination of antennæ in the world which could receive the transmittal. In this way, we get a directional effect without using directional antennæ.

"The only harmful possibility, then, is that some one may interfere with us, by sending at the same instant something on the same wave-length as ours. But, as in the Hammond torpedo-control, any third party can interfere with one or two of each of our five groups of waves, without in the least disturbing our system. And, to make assurance doubly sure, we have perfected a polarized ray, obtained in a manner somewhat analogous to that in which Iceland spar polarizes light, which can be received only by a radio of like polarity. So there isn't the slightest chance of a single portion of your anatomy going astray. As a matter of fact, we don't transmit you yourself at all: we merely dissolve into energy every particle which constitutes your body, and then build it up again, atom for atom, at the other end. Quite spooky, I'll admit, but you'll never notice the difference."

This explanation convinced, but did not reassure the attorney.

He nerved himself to the ordeal. If there was no escape, at least he could deprive these criminals of the satisfaction of seeing him cringe. So he sat calmly in the cubicle, with an assumed nonchalance, and with a forced smile on his bloodless face. He looked his executioner squarely in the eye.

Through his brain ran the quotation, "My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country," and at that he really smiled.

Then the curtains were closed, and he heard the usual formula repeated

between the two scientists over the telephone. There came the flash, and the smell, and the pearly fire streaming from the three coördinate axes.

A wave of nausea swept over the young man, but in an instant he felt quite himself again. He shuddered, and shook his head to clear his brain. Still inside the same curtains he was. Apparently nothing had happened. He drew in his breath sharply through his mouth, and experienced an acute pain in one tooth.

The curtains were thrown open, and he stepped out into an entirely different room, a rough-boarded lumber-camp shack. The motor-generator set, the panel, the coils, and the interrupter were quite differently placed than before, and two strange men in smocks were at the controls. The pterodactyl and the gunman Red were standing with them.

The two men in smocks shook hands gravely with the newcomer, but did not offer to introduce themselves.

The dragon clicked sharply three times, whereupon one of the men handed it a slate and slate-pencil with great deference. To Endicott's surprise, the dragon wrote on the slate, pressing it to the floor with one wing-claw and grasping the pencil with the other. The writing looked like some kind of shorthand.

One of the men read the message and then announced, "The King says to take you to the infirmary. Red, you will escort the gentleman."

So the young prisoner was led out of the laboratory into thick and beautiful mountain woods, through which the moonlight filtered. As he surveyed the totally unfamiliar scene around him, it gradually dawned on Eliot Endicott that he had actually been transmitted somewhere away from Boston

by that preposterous apparatus. New Hampshire, as mentioned by Cohen, sounded highly plausible.

RED led him along a little path for a few hundred feet to another shack, at which he knocked. The door was opened by a trained nurse, who seemed to be expecting a patient, for she took Eliot inside at once, without a word to him or his conductor, who promptly departed.

In what was evidently a reception room, she indicated a chair and left him. For a moment he thought of flight. Here he was totally unguarded for the first time since his capture. Then he realized the futility of attempting escape, until he knew more of his whereabouts and of the location and numbers of the enemy. The camp might well be surrounded by insurmountable fences and patrolled by military guards, for all he knew. Furthermore, it behooved him to learn all that he could about this gang before his letter to Helyn led eventually to his rescue, as he believed it, in the natural course of events, must.

His thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of a brisk young man in a white operating coat, who greeted him with, "So you are the famous Eliot Endicott, the man who is expected to break up our organization. I have read about you in the Boston papers. We are very glad you are going to join us instead. My name is Dr. Victor Chapin."

As he arose to shake hands, Endicott replied, "But I am most decidedly not going to join your confounded organization. Why does every one assume that I am?"

"Because you are," asserted Chapin, smiling. "All I've got to do is to give you a new-soul, and you'll be one of us.

Quite a simple operation, I assure you."

"What in the name of Heaven do you mean? I always thought that I was born with a soul."

"Well, you weren't; not this kind of soul. We who used to be mere humans distinguish them as new-souls. We breed them in the laboratories here, and so I ought to know. However, that can wait until later. We must first repair your teeth. You left all your fillings behind in Boston, I believe."

"But tell me about this 'souls' business."

"That can wait," asserted the young doctor peremptorily. "I really ought not to have mentioned it. We'll attend to your teeth now. Your soul, later."

"You do dental work at this time of night?"

"Yes," replied the doctor. "We run two shifts. Our army is growing so rapidly that it taxes our facilities to the utmost to do all the dental work, and to install all the new-souls. You'll find the dentistry quite painless, as we use oxygen and nitrous-oxide analgesia."

He pushed a button and another white-coated man entered.

"Fix Mr. Endicott's teeth," directed Dr. Chapin sharply.

The other doctor bowed obsequiously to him.

"Just a moment," objected Eliot Endicott. "Will they be doing anything about my soul while I am under this anæsthetic, having my teeth fixed?"

"No," Dr. Chapin assured him. "On my word of honor."

So Endicott went away with the dentist. He didn't like the looks of this new man, who somehow was not quite human. In fact only Cohen and Chapin seemed human, of all the mem-

bers of the organization whom he had yet met. The rest were more in a class with the pterodactyl. There was something uncannily animal about them all. Red, Boris, Frank, the other gunmen, Dr. Polakowski, the two laboratory men on this end, the little trained nurse, and now the dentist. All of them were robots, or so it seemed to Eliot. Cohen and Dr. Chapin were two human beings, directing an army of robots or televoxes.

The teeth-filling was uneventful. A rather pretty but robot-like nurse—not the one who had met him at the door—administered the anæsthetic. He took a couple of deep breaths, and then the doctor removed the nose-clip.

"Aren't you going to fill my teeth?" he asked.

"All over," said the dentist with a smile. "That's the way with oxygen and nitrous-oxide. You don't know that you're going under, or that you are under, or that you're coming out. The King certainly makes use of the best of human inventions. It's a wonder to me that people in the outside world will stand for dentists who don't use analgesia."

ELIOT ENDICOTT got out of the chair a bit bewildered and a bit dizzy. He didn't feel quite himself. He began to wonder if perhaps they hadn't done something to his "soul" while he was under.

The pretty nurse led him away to a private ward in the hospital.

"Dr. Chapin says that you are to live here until you are operated on," she explained.

So he hadn't yet lost, or gained, his soul, or what have you? Greatly relieved, although he had no idea what it all meant, he waved good night to the nurse, shut the door, undressed, put

on the pair of hospital pyjamas which he found hanging there, crawled into bed, and soon was fast asleep. Although he tried to concentrate upon his predicament, and to make plans for outwitting his enemies, he was too tired. These efforts served, like counting imaginary sheep, merely to lull him to a disturbed sleep all the more quickly.

His dreams were troubled. During most of them he fled, hand in hand with Helyn Kent, before man-headed pterodactyls, man-headed pigeons, and animal-headed men.

Immediately on awakening the next morning, he rushed to the window. But it was heavily barred, and the view showed merely the hillside above him. No hope either of escape or of information from that quarter.

An interne brought him his breakfast. When he had finished, he dressed and shaved—clean linen and a razor having been provided. Then Red called for him, with a message that Mr. Cohen wished to see him at once at the administration building.

The way led through a beautiful mountain forest, birches and evergreens, beautiful as only New Hampshire forests can be. There was quite a settlement here, he found, built upon a wooded hillside. Through the trees, he could see far off down into the valley, and to the mountains beyond; but everywhere that he gazed, there was nothing except woods. Not a thing to indicate what part of New Hampshire they were in. —

The administration building was a newly built shack like the rest, only a bit more pretentious. Red left him at the door, and a stenographer—with the same robot-like, unhuman expression as the rest—met him there and led him in.

After a short wait in an anteroom, he was admitted to Cohen's office.

His young classmate greeted him as though he were an important business acquaintance, rather than a prisoner.

"Look here!" Endicott blurted out. "Why all this courtesy, and pretense at being decent to me? I'm your enemy and your prisoner."

Cohen smiled indulgently, as he replied, "Old man, you are going to become one of us, whether you like it or not; but we hope, by courtesy, to induce you to join us voluntarily. Our experience shows that the operation is always more successful when voluntarily submitted to."

Endicott smiled a superior smile. The temptation to exhibit his triumph proved too great for his dramatic instinct to withstand.

"Oh, you supermen!" he sneered. "I dropped a letter in the mail-chute on the way through the hall to your laboratory back there in Boston. I did it right under your very eyes. You mentioned New Hampshire—so did I in the letter."

The last wasn't the truth, but it added to his dramatic triumph.

He continued, "Even now my rescuers are on the way here. You rattlesnakes have caught another fanged creature this time!"

Cohen immediately became visibly

agitated, which fact added still further to Endicott's triumph.

"To whom was the letter addressed?" he snapped.

"Now wouldn't I be a fool to tell you?" sneered Endicott in reply. "One of your gang would be sent to get it away from her."

"Her"? A girl, eh? Your sweetheart, undoubtedly. Well, just watch us make you tell!"

Endicott bit his lip. He ought never have used the word "her"! But he stiffened and said, "You can't make me tell. I'll die first."

"Movie stuff, eh?" laughed Cohen, now calm again. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Eliot, than are dreamt of in your criminal investigations."

He pushed a desk button. The pretty stenographer entered.

"Tell Rajindra Singh to meet me at once in Number Seven. Make it snappy, my dear."

He pushed another desk-button twice. Two robot-like thugs entered.

"Rush this gentleman to Laboratory Number Seven, tie him in a chair, and guard him until I get there."

So Eliot Endicott was unceremoniously hustled to another building, struggling futilely in the iron grip of the two man-bodied creatures, and was carefully tied up.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

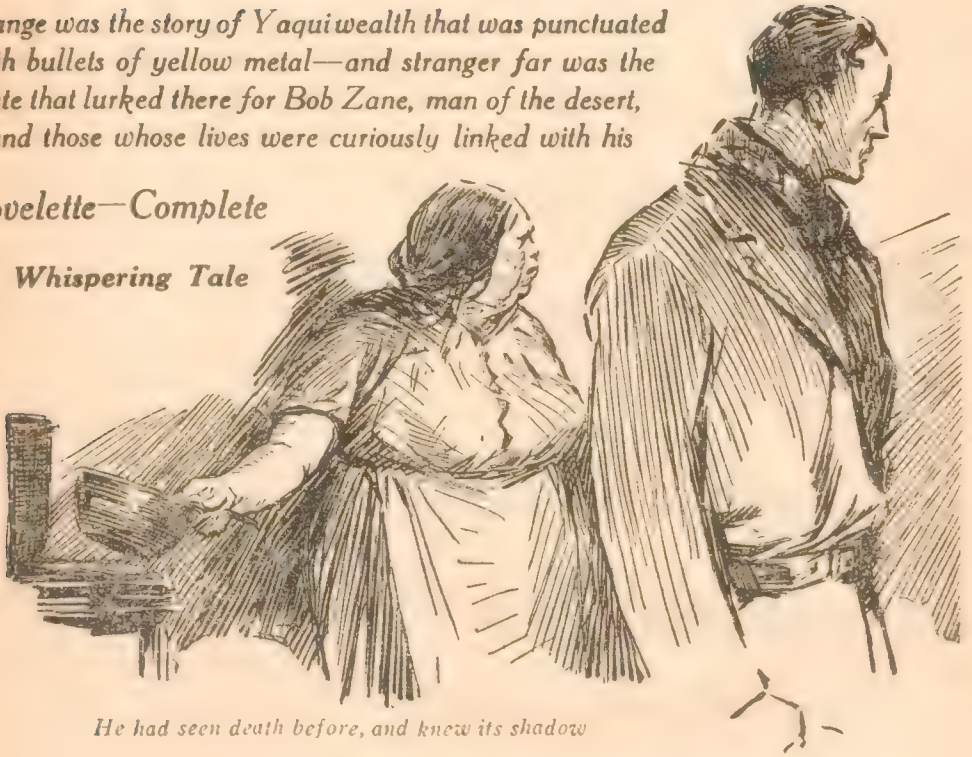


Golden Bullets

Strange was the story of Yaquiwealth that was punctuated with bullets of yellow metal—and stranger far was the fate that lurked there for Bob Zane, man of the desert, and those whose lives were curiously linked with his

Novelette—Complete

A Whispering Tale



He had seen death before, and knew its shadow

By ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

Author of "Stone Frogs," "The Sky's the Limit," etc.

CHAPTER I.

NIGHT SUMMONS.

GO through the desert in a Pullman car and you'll be bored. Travel through it in an automobile and you'll be mildly interested, but disappointed.

"So this is the desert," you'll think. "This is the place about which I've heard so much! Shucks, it's nothing much, just sand and mountains, cacti and sunshine; gasoline stations, not quite so handy."

But get away from the beaten trail in the desert. Get out with your camp equipment loaded on the backs of bur-

ros. Or even take a flivver and get off the main roads. See what happens.

The spell of the desert will grip you before you've left the main road five miles behind. That night you'll sleep beneath steady stars and listen to the whispers that are the night noises of the desert.

By morning you'll either hate and fear it, or you'll love it. I never knew any middle point, not with any one. The desert engenders either fear or fascination, either love or hate.

And if you're one of those who love it, you'll get to the point where the whispers mean much.

You won't hear 'em until you get in

your blankets and the camp fire has died down to a mere blotch of dull red against the gray sand of the desert. Then a wind will stir up from some place. The embers will fan into a golden glow, and

you'll hear the whispers. Of course you'll know it's just the sand rat-

people nudge each other when I go to the theater and point me out—Bob Zane, the man that opened the virgin lode.

At first I thought I'd never go back to the desert. I was tired of living on rationed water. I wanted to be where I could take a bath every day, twice a day if I wanted. I craved fresh linen, vegetables, cream in my coffee, beautiful women, theaters, newspapers.

I thought I was satisfied.

I'd stand on Hollywood Boulevard



ting against the cacti. Maybe, if the wind gets stronger, it'll be sand rustling against sand.

But those are the desert whispers, and you'll get so you listen for them. You'll finally get so you can almost interpret 'em. Sounds funny, but it isn't. It'll come just as you're dropping off to sleep. You'll hear the sand whisper to the sand, and the sand answer, and you'll be just drowsy enough so you'll nod your head in confirmation. But the next morning you can't tell what it was you were agreeing to.

I'VE made my stake out of the desert, and I feel kindly toward it. I've got enough now to wear fine clothes and have a chauffeur to drive me the places I want to go. I've struck it rich, and

at the corner of Cahuenga and watch 'em pass, the well-fleshed, firm-skinned beauties with their peach-and-cream throats, their red lips, and their exploring eyes.

But I got sick of it without even knowing I was.

It happened one afternoon. She was a Spanish girl, and she wasn't of the boulevards. Her skin didn't have the smooth gloss of city life. It had been baked by sun, caressed by wind, moistened by infrequent rain. She was slender, almost stringy. But she moved with a lithe grace that her city sisters couldn't ape; she was vital as a panther.

I thought of her often that evening. I couldn't get her out of my mind.

I drifted into a palatial picture theater. The sound picture wailed through its action. There was a desert scene. I slipped forward to the edge of my chair. And then something happened to the lights. The house was dark. When the picture machine went on the blink you could hardly see your hand in front of your face.

Some one called for patience, that the break was temporary and would be repaired in less than thirty seconds.

The audience sat there in the gloom, and started to whisper. Funny about men, that way. In the dark they seem to lack confidence. They whispered as surreptitiously as though they were afraid of the gloom, afraid a loud noise might bring some night animal pouncing down upon them—instinct, I guess, carry-over memories of past lives when men were food for animals, instead of animals being food for men.

That whisper started in the back of the house. It grew in volume, like a desert wind sweeping down a cañon, sending rustling sand against the cacti. Soon the whisper swept around me, hissing in my very ears, a vast composite of sound—and the lights went on, showing the desert scene on the screen.

I got to my feet as one in a daze.

I tramped on somebody's feet, and he growled. A woman tittered. I didn't even notice them. I stumbled to the aisle, walked rapidly toward the door. My chauffeur was coming at ten thirty. I didn't have time to wait for him, couldn't even stop to telephone him.

I caught a taxi and went to the Arcade Depot. There was a train for Yuma in twenty minutes. I got a lower. Daylight found me at Yuma. I got a flivver and some blankets, a canteen, some grub. I didn't get much. I was

too impatient, like a man who has been too long separated from a loving mistress.

By ten o'clock I was well out in the desert.

THAT night I sat by a little camp fire. The stars blazed steadily.

The little winds were dancing about, making the embers flare up to gold, then dull to russet red. I stretched in my blankets and listened.

Pretty soon I began to hear them, the whispers of the desert.

All about me was that heavy, oppressive silence that stretches down from the very stars. It was broken only by the whispers. Those whispers were so faint I couldn't hear 'em at first. Then the wind freshened, and I could hear the sand whispering to the sand.

I thought it was the desert giving me a welcome back to it, and I smiled a sleepy smile. Then I thought I heard the word "Tucson," and I straightened and snapped my eyes open. The word had sounded awful plain.

But it was just a funny sound the sand had made against the cacti, and I closed my eyes and drowsed again, half listening, half sleeping. I dozed, awoke, sighed and settled to sleep.

And the whispers became plainer. I could hear words, soft, hissing, whispered words.

"The *señor* will come?" asked a hissing voice. There seemed to be something more to it than a sand whisper.

"But the *señor* must come! The man dies."

And there was a warm breath on my cheek. I fancied a soft hand caressed my hair, drew itself along my forehead.

"Softly; to awaken suddenly is bad. The *señor* must open his eyes—"

I snapped my eyes open to see her.

She was dark-skinned, and her oval face was bent over my own, her lips half parted. The eyes were catching the starlight, sending it back. They seemed limpid pools of dark romance, swimming in reflected starlight.

I straightened, and she drew back.

"It is all right, *señor*," she said in the language of Mexico. "I feared to awaken you suddenly. It is bad for you, and you might have reached for your gun and gone 'boom!' and it would have been all over for poor little me."

She laughed, and the stars caught the glint of her pearly teeth and showed them against the warm mystery of her pink mouth.

"You must come," she said.

I struggled to a sitting posture.

"Why must I come, and where?"

"You must come with me to save one of your race who is dying. We have no automobile, nothing but a burro cart, and the heat of the sun would kill him before he reached the main road. But you have your automobile. We saw the lights of your car, saw your camp fire, and it was decided that I should come. I have walked for more than two hours, *señor*, and the camp was hard to find. You made a very small fire, and you let it go out early."

I nodded.

"I wanted to listen to the sand," I said, before I thought.

She lost her smile as she regarded me.

"The *señor*, then, knows the desert," she said. "It is well, otherwise he would not believe."

"What wouldn't I believe?"

"That which you are to hear. But come."

I kicked the blankets off. She sat

silent while I dressed. None of the false modesty of city maidens, none of the curiosity of the morbid, none of the brazenness of the hard-faced women of the camps. She was what she was, a child of the desert; and because I also was of the desert, we were in perfect accord.

I KNEW that I was to go on some errand of mercy, that this young woman had walked miles through soft sand that clung to her ankles, that she was worried about the one I must try to save. I knew that speed counted for something, and I pulled into my clothes, flung the canteen in the car, tossed in the blankets without waiting to roll them, and motioned her to the seat beside me.

"Which way?" I asked.

She pointed to a star.

"That way, *señor*."

"There is a road?"

"There is desert. The *señor* will have to watch and drive with care."

I put the car in low and swung away from my camp, out toward the star.

Twice we had to make detours of direction to get level ground, swinging around the heads of dry washes. Once we got into such deep sand that I had to let some air out of the tires. Finally we saw a hill blotting out the lower stars, showing as a dim silhouette.

"*Señor*," she said, placing her soft hand upon the back of mine, "it is here."

I saw the rudiments of a road, and floor-boarded the throttle. We crept up the hill, making a terrific noise of snarling motor, grinding transmission, spinning tires.

There was a house at the top. A door flung open into a lighted oblong, and a fat woman stood as a black

blotch, framed in gold. She screamed a comment in Spanish. I shut off the motor, and the girl vaulted over the door and ran with flashing ankles. I followed, more slowly. The fat woman showered blessings upon my head, hailed me as one sent from the gods.

The house had that indefinable odor of a place where sickness reigns.

An oil lamp furnished a reddish illumination. There were beds in the single room, a table, a stove, a rude fireplace. A couple of boxes did for chairs. It was a desert home, no better and perhaps a little worse than the average.

On the bed next to the far wall something tossed and turned. Over this bed the girl was stooped, her cool hands soothing in fluttered caresses.

I walked to her.

He was a white man, and he was far gone. His red-rimmed eyes told of wasting fever. The gaunt face seemed but pale skin stretched over white bones. His beard had grown in rough stubble. The hair was matted, the lips tinged with blue.

About the bed was a foul odor, the odor of decomposition.

I knew then that the man was wounded, that it was an old wound, and that he could not be moved. I had seen death before, and I knew the shadow of its fluttering wings.

I wondered how I might break the news to the man on the bed and to the girl. It was hard to say. There was, perhaps, a chance in a million if the man lay there, if he had plenty of water, if his wound were cauterized and treated with proper antiseptics.

To move him over the jolting surface of the desert would mean certain death. Yet the girl had set her heart on his being moved. She recognized the slow march of death in the man's

present surroundings. Had I come there a day sooner it might not have been too late. But his face was already graying.

It was the man who broke the silence. He turned his feverish eyes upon me and smiled. As his lips parted I could smell the fever on his breath.

CHAPTER II.

YAQUI BULLETS.

"**T**INA says she got you, to move me," he said. "It is too late; but I am glad you have come. Draw up a box and listen—listen carefully, for I cannot repeat. I will tell you everything, and then the tax on my strength will bring about the end. So you must listen, and not interrupt, not argue, not question."

I grinned reassuringly.

"Oh, it's not that bad. You can tell me a little, then get some sleep. To-morrow you'll be better. Maybe you can be moved by to-morrow night."

He shook his head, rolling it from side to side upon the flour-sacked bundle that served as a pillow.

"Don't argue! Don't try to salve me over. I know what I know. I'm a surgeon. I know the symptoms. I'll be good for twenty-four hours if I conserve my strength. If I talk I'll go any minute. But I've got to talk. The end is the same in any event. Come closer, don't waste time."

I knew he spoke the truth. The girl felt it. She gave a choking sob, grabbed his hand in hers, pressed it to her lips. He smiled at her, and the fever-red-denied eyes grew tender; then he turned to me.

"Take my wrist in your hand. Hold your middle finger there, on the pulse. As long as it beats firm don't interrupt

me. When you feel it skip a few beats and then race rapidly in little, stringy pulses, that means I am going. Then tell me to be fast. Until then, let me tell it my own way, don't interrupt."

I nodded a promise. He was half delirious, fighting for sanity, and his pulse was rapid, bounding, but regular.

I held the fever-parched flesh, felt the throbbing pulse as it pounded away the life stream beneath my fingers, and listened.

"I am a Los Angeles surgeon. I had an office in one of the new buildings on Wilshire. My name doesn't matter. Civilization had gripped me. I was money mad. I wanted power, and I wanted money.

"I had some measure of success in my profession. I thought I was progressing. I invested and made money. Then came the crash of the stock market. I was wiped out. And I was fighting mad, desperate. I'd have robbed a bank if I could have been certain of getting away with it. You know the frame of mind."

I nodded, because he was half delirious and because I wanted him to get over the preliminaries and get down to business. He went on:

"**T**HEN a girl came into my office. She was just a young thing, society stamped all over her, class in every line of her bearing. But she was in some sort of trouble. There were dark circles under her eyes. Her glance was nervous.

"I thought I knew the symptoms, but I didn't. There was an old man with her, a fellow who was all dried out by desert winds. He must have been about sixty. There was some strange bond between him and the girl, yet she didn't trust him.

"The girl did the talking: 'This man wants an X-ray of his shoulder,' she said.

"I said nothing, but took the X-ray. It would be a cash case and a good fee. I'd see to that, and I knew these cases where they don't give names and talk as though they've carefully rehearsed what they're going to say—which is the case.

"The X-ray showed a bullet under the right scapula. It was an old wound. The scar was nearly faded to normal color. I showed them the plate.

"'Remove that bullet,' said the girl.

"I shook my head. 'It's not advisable,' I told her; 'the wound is an old one, and the bullet has been isolated by the tissues. It's not interfering with the bone or muscle motion, and there's always danger of infection from an operation.'

"She scowled at me. 'We want it removed. If you won't do it, some one else will. There's a good fee in it for you if you do it, nothing if you don't.'

"'Can you go to the hospital this afternoon?' I asked the man.

"'Hospital—hell!' blazed the girl. 'It's a case for an operation right here and now. You've got the equipment.'

"'I'd have to get a nurse.'

"'I'll be your nurse.'

"'You! You'd get sick at the sight of blood!'

"'Try me.'

"I tried her. I got her to help with the anæsthetic, and I performed the operation there on my office operating table. I dug out the bullet, sewed up the cut, put on bandages, and turned to her. She was white-faced, and her lips were tight, but she was standing it one hundred per cent.

"'It's all over,' I told her. 'It'll be a couple of hours before he comes out from under. Then he can be taken

home in a cab or an ambulance. He'll be feeling pretty groggy.'

"She nodded, and began fishing among the packings I'd used and dumped into the bowl at the foot of the table. I asked what she wanted.

" 'The bullet, of course.'

" 'I have it here,' I said, and handed it over.

"And at that time the door opened and Miss Marlan, my regular office nurse, came strolling into the room.

" 'I've missed you,' I said, and my tone wasn't too cordial. I'd almost lost the operation fee over her absence. She'd been due an hour earlier. She looked like the fag end of a big party. She made some carefully thought up excuse, a lie that I didn't even bother to listen to.

" 'I want this bullet tested,' said the girl.

" 'Tested?' I wanted to know. 'What for?'

" 'Gold,' she said.

" 'Bullets,' I explained, speaking as one would speak to a child, 'are made of lead alloy. This one is discolored from having been embedded in the living tissues.'

" 'Will you please test it?' she stormed.

"To please her I got out some acid, a little graduate, cleaned the bullet under a water faucet, and dropped it into the graduate with the tips of my forceps.

"Then I got the surprise of my life. The bullet was almost pure gold!

"My nurse crowded close, watching the test. I'd as soon Miss Marlan hadn't been there. The girl seemed not the least surprised at what the bullet was. She called an ambulance, paid my fee for the operation, and had the unconscious man removed.

"When she had gone, Miss Marlan,

the nurse, looked after her with eyes that were smoky with thought.

" 'Know who she was?' she asked.

" 'No,' I said; 'do you?'

"The nurse shook her head, but I knew she was lying, and that aroused my curiosity."

THE surgeon quit speaking as a fit of coughing seized him. The Mexican girl flung herself upon him, wiping his forehead with a wet rag. She pressed a little bottle of whisky to his lips. He drank, then resumed his story.

"My nurse, Miss Marlan, took occasion to become impertinent a couple of days later, and I discharged her. At the time I thought there was a smirk on her face when I let her go. It seemed to be just what she wanted me to do.

"Then chance gave a clew as to the identity of the girl who had ordered the mysterious operation. She was Stella McRae, daughter of a man who had lost everything in the market. She was engaged to marry a chap named Craleigh, and it was more than rumored that Craleigh was a big creditor of the old man. He had agreed to take the daughter in payment of the debt.

"The girl, Stella, was reported to be visiting friends in the Imperial Valley. I read of that in the society column. But it wasn't until I learned that my nurse, Miss Marlan, and the chap she was going with, a fellow named Luger, had gone into the desert on a prospecting trip, that I suddenly took a tumble. I got busy and traced them, then.

"The society girl, Stella McRae, had run onto this old prospector, and he'd told her of a secret mine somewhere in Mexico, probably in the Yaqui country. The Indians there are outlaws, and they use gold and silver for bul-

lets. That's the old story. I've heard it since, a dozen times.

"Stella McRae wanted to buy her freedom, so she could marry for love instead of for money. My nurse had doped it out and she'd gone down to hijack the mine when it was located. And I had been partially responsible.

"I went after them. I don't know why. Perhaps it was the lure of the money. Perhaps it was because I wanted to do the square thing by the girl. Perhaps it was greed, perhaps it was sympathy. Anyway, I went.

"I traced Miss Marlan and Carl Lugger into the desert. They went through here. Tina knows the way. She acted as guide until I sent her back. That was when the country got dangerous. I was a fool not to have some one who knew the desert with me. I was just a tenderfoot. But I found them; and I was the one who blundered. It was too much smoke from a camp fire, I guess. At any rate, I got the Indians into the country, and then the trouble started."

The dying doctor got that far and then there was another spell of coughing. I felt the form writhing and twisting beneath my hand, felt the pulse grow weak and stringy. I bent forward.

"Be calm," I told him.

He knew it was the end. His eyes grew glassy with effort, but the coughing twisted his system, and then, when he got over the coughing, he was so weak he could hardly speak.

I figured he'd opened up bleeding in the wounds again, and told the girl to bring me some hot water and rags.

The doctor rolled his head in a half circle on the dirty pillow, gasped, and whispered to me in a husky voice.

"You'll go. . . . This is important—bend closer—got to tell you this or

they'll trap you. . . . When you see a painted face on the rock, watch out for—"

And that was as far as he got.

The threadlike pulse stopped. The eyes snapped into some peculiar expression, the iris expanding, then contracting. The head ceased to roll. The whisper died into a rattle and then was silent.

It was a wail from the fat woman that conveyed the news to the girl.

"He is dead," she wailed.

The girl fell forward, her shoulders heaving in sobs, and I comforted them as best I could.

I stayed the night there, and we buried him the next day. He'd been badly shot up, and there had been infection. Why a city physician should have been possessed of the wild urge to go after a secret mine in the Yaqui country was more than I knew.

AS for the golden bullets—well, I'd heard whispers of golden bullets, but, then, one hears all sorts of whispers in the desert. It doesn't do to take 'em too seriously.

But I got to wondering if what he said was true, and before we buried him I explored around a bit in the infected wounds, and I finally carved out a bullet.

The girl came in the room just then, and I dropped the bullet into my pocket. I didn't want her to know. She seemed to be taking it awfully hard as it was.

We buried him in a sandy grave with a little ceremony that wasn't orthodox, but it sounded solemn, and the Mexicans cried and covered their heads with their skirts as I filled in the dirt.

Then we erected a cross, and put a monument of stones on the grave.

After that I got a chance to examine the bullet. I whistled when I'd made a few tests. The bullet was almost pure gold.

That night the girl came to me as I sat by the fire, and slipped her hand in mine.

"He wanted you to go," she said.

I nodded.

"I will go with you part of the way, to show you where the trail is."

The old Mexican wailed a protest, but the girl turned flashing eyes upon her and spat forth sentences that sounded as the rattle of gunfire. The old woman dried up.

It was a strange thing: golden bullets, Yaqui country, a girl for a guide. Would the Indians be expecting some one to come in, following the wounded man's outbound trail?

The Yaquis are queer chaps. They respect a white man as long as a white man respects them. They're fiendishly cruel when the occasion warrants. The Mexicans persecute them, and they torture the Mexicans when they get a chance. They're proud, and they're independent, and they live in one of the richest mineral countries in the world.

They tell stories of the Yaquis following up the main ridge of the Sierra Madre range, and coming in to trade for rifles with certain tight-lipped traders who slink down from Arizona. It's a grim business, and the story goes that a rifle brings its weight in gold.

I'd heard whispers of the rifle traffic, as has every one who has lived in the desert. And I'd heard of the reloading tools the Yaquis buy; and I'd heard of golden bullets.

The story goes that they won't bother to pack lead back to their homes because gold and silver make good bullets, and they have all they want of them and more. But I'd never seen any

golden bullets, nothing but whispers which had been through the desert, just like the whispers of the lost mines.

But now a tenderfoot had gone into the country and had found a golden bullet. He'd found too many of 'em; but then, he was a tenderfoot. If his story was true, there was a society girl in there somewhere, and a nurse who had taken her lover and gone in on a hijacking expedition, and the country would be swarming with Yaquis—perhaps.

There was always the chance the Indians had only stumbled onto the surgeon, shot him up, and figured he was the only miner in the country.

"You will go, *señor*?" crooned the girl.

I nodded and squeezed her hand.

"If you will show me the way, Tina."

And then she put her head on my shoulder and cried.

"He wished it so," she muttered between her sobs.

CHAPTER III.

SECRET CAMPS.

WE started before dawn, trying to get as many miles as possible behind us before it got hot. We had burros, and we were traveling light. The fat Mexican—an aunt or something, I never did get her relationship to Tina straightened out—stood in the doorway of the shack, her head bowed and covered with her skirt, and the sound of her wailing followed us out over the dark grayness that infolds the desert before dawn.

I'd crossed the Mexican line that night when I came with the girl to see the dying doctor, so I didn't bother too much about border patrols. We were

seven or eight miles south of the border at the start.

The country was rolling, sandy, covered with cactus and some mesquite. The mountains were to the left, blotting out the light that began to ooze through the higher passes as the eastern sky got rosy. We were following a rough trail, and it was hard going.

The girl walked mechanically. Her eyes were filled with grief, but she never complained of fatigue or the cruel rocks that sprinkled the trail as we climbed higher into the mountains.

We stopped about eleven in the shadow of a mesquite and had some cold tortillas and beans. Then I spread the blankets for a pillow, and we got some sleep. It was hot, and the flies were bothersome, but we were tired enough to sleep anywhere.

By two o'clock in the afternoon we were up, and we had a little water from the canteens. Then I tightened the cinches on the pack burros, and we started on again.

We went on until well after dark. It was the sort of travel that took it out of a man, hard, steady, hot, tedious. The girl seemed as fresh as when we had started that morning. Her eyes were a little darker, perhaps. Her lips remained unsmiling, and she seemed in something of a daze, but she traveled at a pace that ate up the miles.

We camped that night. I don't think she slept much. Once, when the whisperers began to drift over the face of the desert, I heard her sobbing to herself. But I didn't keep awake to listen to her. I was dog tired, and I knew talk would do no good. It was one of those things time alone can heal. She had loved him, and she had loved him with a wealth of passion that only the Latin blood can know.

Perhaps the night wind was stirring the whispering sand until she thought she could hear the sound of his voice. I don't know. I only know that the wind sent the whispering sand skidding and whirling through the draw where we had camped, and that the girl sobbed, and that the burros were restless and the stars blazed down steadily.

Early in the morning she was up, and she had the fire going and a little coffee water bubbling by the time I woke up. It was the smell of the coffee that awakened me.

I caught up the burros and saddled the packs. We started as the east was just getting a faint brassy hue that made the stars retire to needle points. It was cold with the dry cold of the desert places. Soon it would be hot. We were rationing ourselves on the water.

Near ten o'clock the girl stopped.

"Can we camp here?" she asked.

I looked at the sun.

"We could make another hour before the siesta," I said. "Of course, if you are tired—"

She shook her head impatiently.

"*We* camped here, the second night," she said, and then I saw the blackened ashes of a little camp fire off to one side.

I nodded and flung the packs off the burros. She crouched down beside the blackened embers and lived with her memories.

The sun was beating down on that little circle of charcoal, but she didn't seem to mind.

After a while I dozed off.

When the flies woke me up she was still sitting there.

That afternoon we crossed the railroad on an angle and then struck up into the Sierra Madre range. The

going got rough, and we ran into some timber. There was more water here, and it was cooler.

AFTER a week we were in a well watered country, and we began to go pretty careful. I made small fires out of bone-dry wood, and I didn't make any fire at all at night.

On the tenth day the girl pointed to a little rock-bound depression. From the looks of the trees I figured there was a spring there and some green grass.

"That is where he left me. I camped there and was unmolested. He came back three days later, and—he was as you saw him, shot."

I nodded.

He'd have stood more chance if she had kept him there and put herbs on the wounds, but there was no use making her feel sorry; and they'd both been pretty well scared. The Yaqui is none too gentle.

"I shall wait there for you," she said.

I shook my head. "You'll go back! Now, which way did the *señor* go from here?"

She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"I know not the way he went, and I will not go back. I wait. My place is here. You are doing that which *he* asked. Every night he whispers to me of what I am to do."

"No, you'll have to go back. It'll take me a long time to accomplish what I have in mind. I'll leave you a burro with plenty of grub."

She pouted.

"I could be of more use here."

"No."

"But we can camp there to-night, in our old camp?"

"To-night only, and there will be no fire."

She accepted my word as law. We camped there in the dark. There was no sand to whisper now. But the trees rustled in the wind that came up before dawn, and they gave soft whispers, vague promises. It was spooky.

I got her burro packed in the morning. She kissed me good-by. I watched her out of sight and then began to explore the country. I felt certain I could find anything that a tenderfoot had found.

There were jagged mountains, covered with pine, dry air that blew over the ridges, vaulted blue black sky, great cañons that were filled with purple tinged shadows. Everywhere was grim silence, save for the rustle of wind in the tops of the trees.

Somewhere ahead was the place where Indians found gold more plentiful than lead. It was up to me to find that place, and to see that my burros were in condition to bring out much of that treasure.

I found a box cañon with a spring, and I worked all day making a rock inclosure that would keep the burros in the cañon. There was plenty of feed and water.

I camped without a fire.

In the morning I started out, a little parched corn meal tied in a sack at my belt, a little bacon rolled up in a blanket on my back, my rifle and plenty of shells, a six-gun at my hip for work at close quarters.

I went slowly, looking for tracks and hugging the shadows. I saw several deer, and the fresh meat looked tempting, but I wouldn't risk a shot.

That night I camped high on a ridge by a trickling spring. I made no fire. The single blanket I carried barely served to turn the wind that sprang up about midnight. I lay and shivered, catching a little sleep.

I listened to the wind in the pines, thought of the apartment I had fixed up in Hollywood, my car, the chauffeur—and I was satisfied it was all a mistake, trying to live in civilization. I had gotten soft. The elevation and the wind kept me from being comfortable in a single blanket. That was what beds and mattresses, hot baths, and servants had done for me.

Toward morning I got more sleep.

AS I rolled up my blanket and chewed on a little parched corn meal, I got the idea some one was watching me. I got back in the shadow of the pines and waited for more than an hour. But nothing moved that I could see, except some deer that came in to the water hole.

I oozed out of the shadow and slipped down the ridge. Here and there I could see tracks, Indian tracks. Then I came to some softer soil and saw shod tracks, those of a woman and those of a man.

I studied those tracks. They'd been made right after a light rain, and then the sun had baked them in the soil. They were running tracks. The woman went first. Back of her, covering her retreat, the man plodded along.

I could see where he'd fired a gun from time to time, a thirty-thirty. The brass shells were along the side of the trail he'd made. It hadn't been an Indian firing those shots or he'd have picked up the cartridges.

Then I came to where Indian tracks had intercepted the man tracks. The girl seemed to have gotten away. The Indians and the man milled around in something of a mess, and then there were no more tracks of a man's shoes.

I crept along cautiously, watching, waiting. It looked like a poor time to be trying to sneak a mine out of the

Yaqui country. It has been done, but only when a man could slip into the country, work fast and silently, and slip out again.

Apparently the society girl and the prospector had run into trouble. He'd probably told her the story of the mine, one he'd discovered earlier only to be shot up and driven out. She'd had the bullet removed for proof, then financed the expedition. And it looked as if the prospector were out of the game.

Twice that afternoon I had the idea I was being followed. So that night I built a little fire, well screened by brush, let it die down to coals. Then I took some brush tips and filled out my blanket so it looked like a sleeper. I placed the dummy right close to the circle of coals and climbed a tree to wait.

Half an hour passed without anything happening. I was getting ready to come down, figuring my ideas of being followed had all been the bunk. Then I saw a shadow cautiously gliding toward the camp. I crouched in the tree, saw that my six-gun was loose in the holster, and waited.

I was unprepared for that which followed.

They shot in a crashing volley without warning. I could see the flashes of their guns, hear the whine of the bullets, see the dummy figure jump and twitch as the bullets crashed into it.

Then everything was silent.

I waited for them to come up to plunder. Then, if there weren't too many, I'd show them the difference between shooting down a tenderfoot doctor and tackling a fellow that had spent most of his life in the desert.

But they didn't come in. They were satisfied.

I saw them moving off, a compact little group.

I waited an hour, got down the tree, went to my blanket. There were half a dozen holes in it. I dug into the ground back of the blanket, probing after bullets. I got a couple. They were golden, and they looked as though they'd been but freshly molded.

Usually the Yaquis will give one warning to a white man in their country. That warning takes the shape of an Indian standing with upraised palm, motioning the traveler to go back. When one has that warning, if he's wise, he goes back. I'd been trying to keep under cover and not get that warning. But they weren't giving any.

CHAPTER IV.

BY THE PAINTED ROCK.

THE way this play stacked up, there was just one thing to do, and it was up to me to do that quickly.

Sometimes a fellow can get away with a stake from the Yaqui country. It has been done. Sneak into it along the backbone of the Sierra Madres, keep quiet, find a mine, take what can be taken, and leave. It's a big country, and if a man keeps well under cover he can stay in it for weeks without any one being the wiser.

Now I was up against it right. Something had riled the boys more than usual. I didn't know just what, but I wasn't staying to find out; not after they had me spotted.

I shouldered my pack and started out.

Traveling a rough country in the dead of night isn't what it's cracked up to be. In the first place, very few people realize how utterly dead dark the coun-

try can get. They're accustomed to some sort of street light.

But I had the stars, and there'd be a lemon peel of moon some time before dawn. I did the best I could, watching to see I didn't sprain an ankle.

After a while I struck easier going. Then the moon came up. Then it got gray dawn, and I slipped along at a half run. By the time the east was turning rosy I'd picked my hiding place, a little patch of scrub brush, way up on a naked shoulder of mountain. The black shadows would contrast with the glitter of sunlight on that bare slope when the day got well started, and I'd be pretty safe from detection. If anybody did start coming my way I'd have lots of open country to scatter lead over.

I dozed off because I was tired. The flies woke me up. I was cramped. My hip was on a rock. I moved, batted at the flies, shifted my weight to the other hip, and dozed off.

I thought I smelled smoke. Then I thought I heard the high notes of a woman's laugh. I frowned. It was a poor place to get goofy ideas.

Then I heard the bass rumble of a man's voice.

I sat up, looked around carefully, and then began to bore my eyes into the shadows below me.

There was a little cañon opening up below the bare shoulder of mountain. It ran down in a steep gash of bowlder and gravel until it hit a patch of pines. Then there was some brush, and, lower down, dense shade. I thought I could hear the trickle of water. And on the ledge a face had been painted.

Then my eyes caught a flicker of motion, and a girl walked out of the shade.

She must have been four hundred yards away. I couldn't see too many

details, but she was slender, graceful-limbed, and she was white.

A man called to her, and she stepped back.

It was a bad situation, but my duty was clear. They were whites, and I'd probably drawn the Indians to them. There was an even chance the Yaquis would pick up my trail some time during the day and follow it up. I'd have to warn those people, get 'em to take cover with me, make a stand during the day, travel at night.

I broke cover and came down the side of the slope, intent only on getting across that patch of sunlit space in the shortest possible time.

I hit the boulders, jumped from rock to rock, clattering my way down to the bottom. Yet they didn't spot me. They must have been the worst sort of tenderfeet.

I slipped through the shadow and came on them.

It was a pretty scene. She was in his arms, his head bent down over her lips, one arm around her waist, pulling her toward him.

"I hate to interrupt, folks," I said.

THEY gave one swift jump. The girl darted to one side. The man swung a hand toward a new, shiny gun that dangled from a leather holster that showed a hardware-store yellow.

"Forget it!" I snapped. "You're in Yaqui country. The Indians are on the warpath over something or other, and I'm afraid they're trailing me. I stumbled onto your camp and so had to warn you."

The man's hand slowly left his hip, but his eyes were hard and watchful.

"Who are you?" he asked.

I let him have it in bunches. There wasn't much time to waste.

"Zane's the name, Bob Zane. Came into this country at the request of a dying doctor, looking for a lost patient, Stella McRae . . . and, maybe, hoping to dig up a little metal for my pains."

Their eyes flickered from face to face.

"I'm Stella McRae," said the girl.

"Figured you'd have to be her, or else the nurse, Miss Marlan. Who's the man?"

She sighed.

"That's Ned Craleigh." Then, as if feeling more explanation was due me, added: "He was the man whom I hated. Now I love him."

The man nodded. "Her father interceded to get her to marry me. She thought I'd bought him. She wanted to get money to square the account. She did it. I followed her. She wanted to buy me off, but she came to realize my affection was on the level."

I let his words seep through my mind, trying to figure everything they meant.

"In other words, you've found a mine?"

It was the girl who answered.

"And how!" she said.

I looked her over. She was a dark kid with smoky eyes and red lips. There was a brazen way she had of looking at one. Her clothes were out-of-class stuff, but class from top to bottom. She smiled into my eyes.

"Like my looks?" she asked.

I caught a glimpse of the man's face. It was twisted into black hatred. Only for an instant did the expression flicker on his features, and then he was smiling again.

"Come on and I'll show you what we've found," he said.

I followed him. The girl came behind me.

There was a little spring, a stream, some piles of dirt that had evidently been washed, a gold pan. The man tugged at a flour sack, which was doubled back and sewed to reënforce it.

I caught a glimpse of yellow metal.

"Gold?" I asked.

"Gold," he said, and his lips mouthed the word as though the very thought had started a flow of saliva.

I gave a swift look at the way the place had been worked—amateurish.

"There's lots more here," I said.

The man nodded. "It goes down from the grass roots."

"You haven't any burros. I've got some pack stock cached a few miles from here. Maybe we can make a dicker. But we've got to get out now. We can't stay here."

He looked at the girl. She nodded.

I rubbed around some more. Somehow or other, things didn't seem just right. Then I caught a glimpse of some clothes, woman's clothes they were: silk undies, hiking stuff, boots, a jacket.

The girl followed the direction of my glance.

"Sloppy housekeeping," she said, and moved over to the pile.

She tucked the silk out of sight, threw the other clothes over her arm. Something rolled from the pocket of the trousers, something that glittered. I picked it up. It was a compact.

"How about making a deal on the burro transportation?" I asked.

The man laughed.

"Don't be foolish. We've got burros cached out ourselves. How'd you think we got in here?"

There was a rasping something in his tone I didn't like. The girl's hand was stretched out for the compact.

The cover was loose. I had a peep inside, and I saw it was an outfit for

a blonde. This girl was a brunette. And I saw the print of a woman's bare foot in the mud by the stream.

I jumped back.

The man's hand streaked for his gun. It was the girl that got me, though. She went through the air in a flying tackle. By the time my rifle was halfway around she was clinging to my arm.

"Shoot him, Carl!" she screamed.

And I found the end of Carl's gun boring into my eyes.

"Drop the rifle," he ordered.

CHAPTER V.

DESERT TORTURE.

I HESITATED until I saw something in Carl's eyes that glittered, and the girl's teeth sank into my arm. Then I dropped the gun. The girl unbuckled my belt, and the six-gun and cartridges dropped to the ground.

"You're a damn fool," said the man.

I said nothing. I could only agree with him. The girl laughed, just the sort of a laugh I'd expect from her.

"We've got to beat it, Carl. Kill him."

He shook his head.

"We'll treat him the same way we did the girl. It's a Yaqui trick. I've read of it. If any one finds him they'll never believe but what the Indians did it."

I knew then what he meant, and what they'd done with the girl who had found the mine.

The Yaquis have done it. They've done lots of things.

It's simple. Simply strip the victim stark naked and turn him loose. There is lots of cactus in the country. There's

lots of blistering sunlight, and there are lots of sharp rocks. The ground gets so hot under that light that you can cook an egg by simply leaving it out in the sun for fifteen minutes. And civilized feet don't go well over sharp rocks, not with a few hundred miles of travel over an arid country staring one in the face.

As a matter of fact, about all one would have to do in that country would be to take a man's canteen away from him.

He'd have a hard time getting out. It's sixty miles between water holes in places.

The girl prodded me in the ribs.

"Strip," she said.

The man nodded and backed up his nod with a gesture of the weapon he held.

I had one chance of outwitting them. It was a poor chance, but I took it rather than jump at sure death from the gun. I stripped off my clothes. They left me nothing, not even a scrap of covering.

"March," said the man, "and march up the cañon. I want to see you well over the top of the hill."

I marched.

My feet struck the sharp rocks, and I lurched forward to lessen the pain. The girl laughed, a cruel, cutting laugh.

"Faster," said the man. "We can't wait here all day. We've got work to do."

I made some progress. The sharp rocks cut my feet. Then I staggered out of the shadow into the blinding sunlight. It fastened on my skin at once, a blistering blanket. The rocks under my feet became burning coals. I tried standing on one foot for a while, then the other. It was no good. The torture on the one foot more than

made up for the temporary relief the other got.

I knew that by standing in one place until I had drawn the heat out of the stones I could get some relief. But the man was yelling at me to get started, and there was a tone in his voice I didn't like.

I went on as best I could. The tortured skin, hot and puffed, offered no resistance to the sharp edges of the rocks. The soles were cut in half a dozen places by the time I'd gained the top of the ridge.

I went over and looked for shelter, but I didn't dare to stay too close—not with what I had in mind.

Finally, when I was satisfied they'd lost me, I ducked into some shade.

THE punishment a mile of travel had inflicted on my feet had made them a mass of sores. The sun had burned into my skin, and the flies followed me in droves. It was simply plain hell.

Civilized man is pretty much a creature of environment.

But the man Carl had mentioned his burros. There was one place where he'd be almost certain to leave them. After half an hour's rest I set about cutting branches with sharp rocks, stripping off the bark, and trying to tie the sticks onto my feet with it.

It was only a partial success. My feet were already swollen, bleeding, and hot dirt was ground into the cuts. There were blisters forming under the skin. Every step was like ten thousand hot knives working up into my agonized feet.

The bark wasn't strong enough to hold the "sandals" together, and it wore through after a few steps, but I made progress, and I kept to the shadows. All the time I had the feeling that

Yaqui eyes were watching me. It was not a comfortable feeling.

I thought of the girl who had preceded me—a blonde, with the skin of a blonde. I thought of what the sun would do to that skin.

And we were miles and miles from the nearest succor.

It was mid afternoon before I gained the place where I wanted to go, and I was burned red, my feet were masses of raw flesh, swollen, tortured. I left bloody prints on the hot ground.

But Carl's burros were there.

I managed to catch one after an agony that seemed an eternity of suffering, and got on his back. I steered him by pulling his ears, turning his head this way and that, and I prodded him along with the point of a sharp rock.

The couple were still up the cañon above. Once I heard the girl laugh.

It was a care-free, voluptuous laugh. The sound churned up anger in my soul, but I was a sick man. Ten thousand times more foolish to try to sneak up on them and get a weapon by surprise than to do what I had in mind. It was a slim chance, and an only chance.

I prodded the burro along at a snail's pace. I was afraid I might be discovered at any time. It was ten miles to where I'd cached my own stock, and I was naked, sunburned, wounded by stone bruises, weaponless in the midst of the Yaqui country.

The burro plodded on.

The coolness of dusk was like a benediction to my parched skin, but the fever was commencing, and soon I burned just as though ten thousand suns were beating down upon my skin. The burro wanted to quit for the night, and I had trouble with him.

Then, just as I was figuring it was

hopeless, after all, there was a flicker of motion in the dark shadows, and something jumped toward me.

The burro started, shied, and I spilled to the ground.

Tina was on me, muttering soothing words, crooning, patting my hot skin, her fingers at my feet. Then she caught the burro, put me back on, slipped a rope around his neck, and started to lead him.

The next three hours were like a nightmare, but we came to her camp. Tina had herbs—where she'd gotten them, I don't know. She put them on my skin, making sort of a paste by bruising the leaves between smooth rocks and spreading them over me. There were other herbs she put on my sore feet. I slept.

In the morning Tina was there again, and with her was another girl, a blonde, who was swathed in a light blanket and who limped as she walked.

"You?" I asked.

She nodded.

"I'm Stella McRae."

"You found the mine?"

"Yes, I kept on after the Indians got the old prospector, and found it. I knew a little something about placer work. I had dabbled around in geology in college, and I washed out quite a bit of gold. Then the girl and the man came. . . . You know what they did."

"How did you get here?"

"Tina was scouting around. She was worried about you. She found me, put leaves on my skin, and hid me in the shade. She walked here, got a burro, came back to me, carried me in, then started to look for you. You tried to send Tina home, but she doubled back."

I held out my hand to Tina. There were tears in her dark eyes.

"*He* whispered to me," she said.

I didn't know about that. But I'd left an extra revolver with Tina, and somebody or something was doing a lot more than whisper to me about what I was going to do with it.

I didn't say anything, though; I let the girls think we were starting back.

Stella McRae never said a word about the lost gold, yet I knew what that gold meant to her.

IT was well after midnight of the third day that I felt well enough to try it. I'd manufactured some sandals out of a pack saddle. My clothes were mostly flour sacks.

The girls were sleeping. I took a burro and the gun, left a note scribbled with charcoal, and started.

It was dark, pitch dark, but I could get the direction from the stars, and the burro could feel out the road to travel. By gray dawn I was near where I wanted to be.

I slipped off the burro and started a stalk, and I'd never stalked a deer with more caution.

I came to the cañon just as the first rays of dawn were making things light, and I hugged the cold shadows, my gun held at ready. Carl Lugger wasn't going to get any breaks, not if I knew it. My sore feet made walking an agony, but there was that in my soul which transcended any bodily pain.

The sun came up over the top of the ridge, but the rays wouldn't penetrate into the cañon for a couple of hours yet. A faint wind stirred through the trees. The water rippled and purled over the rocks.

I saw the cold ashes of a dead fire, and then I saw something white, bulky. I bent forward. It looked like a flour sack. I reached for it.

It was the sack of gold, so much of it that it would have torn the double

cloth unless handled carefully. That was strange. Why would they leave the gold out in the open in this manner? As a trap?

I looked swiftly about me, and then my eye caught a pile of cloth.

I looked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again.

There were silk undies, well tailored outing clothes, khaki hiking jacket. And there were a man's clothes, even down to the underwear.

I looked more closely, saw the bare-foot tracks leading up the cañon.

And then I saw the tracks made by Yaqui Indians. The cañon was full of them. I'd been so intent upon detecting the sleepers I hadn't bothered to peer into the dim light for tracks.

There was no sign of weapons. The Indians had cleaned them out. But they'd not bothered with the gold. That was typical Yaqui psychology. There was plenty of gold in the country. They didn't do much bartering, and, when they did, they used the gold as sparingly as possible. They knew that gold attracted unwelcome visitors.

I judged the tracks were about two days old.

The girl was a brunette. Her skin would withstand the sunlight better than the man's. But that blazing sunlight at a high elevation with the actinic rays working overtime . . . and two days!

I shrugged my shoulders.

Doubtless the Yaquis had been watching the camp for some time. They'd seen the couple send their two victims out into the sunlight, stripped naked, barefooted. And the Yaquis had doubtless chuckled at the performance.

They are cruel, those Yaquis, when the occasion demands, and they are fighting to keep their remaining country free from invaders. But they are

also just, with a justice that is not tempered by mercy.

I LOADED the gold on the burro and started back, reaching the camp well toward noon. I handed the gold to Stella McRae.

"Yours," I said.

She asked me questions. I did not answer them then, and I haven't answered them later. Neither did I try to return to the cañon for more gold, nor to follow the barefoot tracks of the two who had been driven from that shade.

I knew what I would find. First the prints of bare feet. Then a little spot of blood. After that, more blood, until finally the whole imprint of the foot would be found outlined in blood, blood that was baked black beneath the rays of the fierce sun. And if I followed those bloody tracks . . .

We were unmolested on the return journey.

Stella McRae gave some gold to the fat Mexican, a good deal to Tina. She wanted me to take half. I refused. She would probably need it all. Perhaps, some day when things had blown over, I'd slip back into that Yaqui country, traveling alone and light, and bring out some more gold. I hoped it would not be in the form of a bullet.

We parted at the shack. Stella McRae and I left the others. Tina and the fat Mexican kissed me good-by. Stella and I flivvered off across the

desert. We were silent during most of the trip.

She kissed me good-by at Yuma. There were tears in her eyes, and she made me promise to call on her. Me, a sun-browned desert adventurer, calling upon a society girl! And yet—

I didn't return to Hollywood immediately. I waited a couple of nights on the desert. I wanted to hear the sand whisper again. Finally I loaded up and drove back.

My chauffeur looked as though he was seeing a ghost.

"We thought you'd been kidnaped, sir—taken for a ride."

"Nothing as exciting as that."

He looked at me with something of wistfulness in his tired eyes.

"Gosh, it must be great to be able to duck out whenever you feel like an adventure. But they tell me there ain't any real adventures left in the desert any more. . . . Say, what's that new stickpin you've got?"

He came closer.

"Looks like it was a gold bullet mounted on a pin!"

I shrugged my shoulders and turned to the papers.

I was reading of the breaking off of the engagement between Stella McRae, the leader of the younger set, and the wealthy broker, Ned Craleigh, when the chauffeur interrupted me again.

"By gosh, I'll bet you've been places in the last three or four weeks."

"And done things," I echoed.

THE END.





Barbazonne steadied and fired again

Strong Man

Forbidden the Alabama "piney woods" which hold the secret of his past and the opportunity of his future, Henri Jugues defies the command—and the assassins—of the Cajan woods czar, Barbazonne

By ANTHONY M. RUD

Author of "Big Casino," "The Albino Ogre," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

HENRI JUGUES, a World War veteran, was a Cajan, raised in the Alabama "piney woods," but educated in the North. The Cajans were descendants of the French Acadian exiles—the people of Longfellow's poem "Evangeline"—intermixed with Indian blood.

Henri loved Patricia Reilly, daughter of Mack Reilly, Mobile political

boss, but was determined to solve the mystery of his own parentage before marrying her.

Also, he had a great ambition to overthrow the tyrannous rule of Jules Barbazonne, the piney woods boss, who was keeping the Cajans in isolation, poverty and ignorance. Henri wanted to bring enlightenment and financial independence to his people by teaching

This story began in the Argosy for May 31.

them how to plant profitable crops and, at the suggestion of Patricia's father, by building an automobile road through the forest.

Barbazonne warned him to keep away from the big woods, and even hired Reilly's house boy to throw a hand grenade at him; but the bomb killed only the house boy, and Henri set off on a fateful journey into the forbidden territory.

In a Cajan chapel deep in the forest he was attacked by a mulatto sub-machine gunner, and shot him dead.

CHAPTER V.

THE ASSASSINS.

TRENCH training and instinct served Henri Jugues well in the ensuing moments. Besieged in a tiny log-shanty church in the piney woods of Alabama, the ex-captain was aware that the treacherous sub-machine gunner who had fallen there at the doorway would never rise again.

Yet Henri was too wary to go forward to investigate his victim immediately. He realized that other assassins might be—and probably were—lurking in the forest.

Thrusting a new clip into his pistol, he stepped to the right-angle corner of the chapel near the doorway. His features held a merciless sternness ingrained by the war. "Kill or be killed" had been the slogan along the Hindenburg line too long for Henri Jugues to cherish any false sentimentality toward persons attempting to murder him.

With great care the besieged man put his eyes to a crack in the case-hardened pine sheathing of the wall, and scanned the surrounding scrub.

A slight movement of the laurel

caught his attention, whereupon he smiled savagely. There amid the pink bells of the thicket he saw something long and brown poking forth—the barrel of a shotgun! Behind it he could make out the battered felt hat and shoulders of a man.

Still Henri withheld his fire. There might be more of the band surrounding the sides and back of Sims Chapel, guarding against a possible desperate attempt to burst and escape through the flimsy walls, or burrow under them through the sand and clay.

Yes, there was a third man! Slowly, with true woods caution, the second member of the gang approached. There was a muttered word of question which the man at bay could not distinguish. But then came the growled answer—one which made Henri stiffen suddenly.

"He's prob'ly dead. I don't hear a sound."

It was spoken in Cajan French, the speech of his own people. Then these two who waited to pour buckshot into him were not mulattoes, but his own white piney woods kindred! What they had been doing in company of the sub-machine gun assassin, Henri could easily guess; likely enough it was Jules Barbazonne's method of discouraging unwelcome visitors. The strong man of the woods had shown his hand again!

Slowly, holding shotguns couched at their hips ready for instant action, the pair of bushwhackers warily approached the chapel wall, one on either side of the open doorway. From his coign of vantage Henri could have winged them both, yet suddenly realized he must not shoot except in extremity. He *recognized* the two!

They were lanky youths in their late 'teens, brothers. Henri had known

their father well—Andre Druot, a kindly, white-haired old fellow. There had been a sister, too—Aline, a knock-kneed, shoestring-legged brat with big black eyes, about thirteen or fourteen years of age when Henri had gone back to Camp Devens, Massachusetts, for his officer's training.

Aline's idolatry of Henri, the first Cajan of the region to don khaki, had been a trifle embarrassing at that time. According to custom, all the babes, girls, matrons and old women of the vicinity had come and kissed gravely this son of the woods who was going forth to battle. Aline herself, an absurdly emotional child even then, had wept and clung to him—the only semblance of a hero she had encountered in her starved girlhood.

And, during the dreary months, while the most monstrous and distorted reports of the war floated up from the telegraph outposts at Citronelle and Vinegar Bend—passed from mouth to mouth, growing more incredible with each wondering and exaggerated repetition—a gangling girl made a daily pilgrimage through the mold and mire of the wooded branches, to the pine altar at Sims Chapel—there to kneel and weep and pray for her soldier.

"GUSTAV! Pierre Druot!"
 Henri's voice crackled sharply, bringing the two stealthy sentinels to an astounded halt. They looked up blankly, their rugged if sulky countenances twin masks of bewilderment.

Swinging into rapid harangue—a high-pitched, speedy lingo, half sing-song, which is incomprehensible to any one not schooled for years in this queer mixture of French, Indian and English speech—Henri told them who

he was: Henri Jugues, born in these woods, friend of their father, their sister and themselves.

He identified himself beyond the slightest shadow of doubt, replying to the boys' half-stupefied questions in a manner which finally convinced them they had been making a strange and tragic mistake.

Then Henri emerged, still cautious in case these might not be all of the party sent to settle his hash. Yet no one else appeared.

The former captain was too familiar with customs of the woods to attempt immediate questioning of these two boys. Besides, it was clear enough in his mind who must have been the instigator of the affair. No one save Barbazonne had the slightest interest in getting him out of the way.

Henri talked to the youths, telling them about the great war, how Mother France had been saved, how the two volunteer Cajan companies had distinguished themselves when brigaded with French units, storming the famous wooded hill at Armentières, to the pride of all New Acadia.

He told them of the curiosities of civilization beyond the confines of the piney woods, and, much like a prestidigitator, opened his musette bag and took from his food pack provisions strange to them. As he built a tiny fire of fat pine, covered for greater heat by dried oak branches, his compact kit of tin dishes and iron skillet with knife, fork, and spoon, kept the boys' eyes wide.

He served them in turn with foods such as they had never tasted before, and climaxed it with coffee made simply by stirring a spoonful of essence into a cup of boiling water. Though the process involved was far beyond their comprehension, and though it

was a meal foreign to their "hawg-'n'-hominy" appetites, it thrilled them, and won Henri their whole-hearted loyalty.

They scarcely said a word between them, but he knew that from these two, the whole Cajan woods would hear friendly reports of him... That was all he had hoped to get from the first of his own people whom he encountered.

He directed the Druot boys in the disposal of the mulatto assassin's body. There was no use notifying any authorities—no coroner or sheriff would venture into that part of the piney woods. So the mire—and possibly the alligators—had their way with the deceased Tub Calvert, inexperienced machine gunner. Henri looked over the diabolical small weapon, and thrust it in his pack.

DURING the next hour the war veteran made good use of his ascendancy over these two who had been sent to kill him. He gave each a silver dollar—huge pay for the woods—and told them finally to go back to his car.

"There," he said, "you'll find certain effects which I left behind because they were too heavy for one man to carry. Will you two boys bring up every bit of this stuff—taking especial care with the burlapped bundles holding the citrus slips?"

"I reckon—you know—we do all you say—now!" answered Pierre Druot, who was proud of his painfully acquired English speech. "Where she go?"

Henri smiled and gave directions. About two miles northwestward, just a little way off the so-called highway—no more than a cattle track in the sand—was a cabin which had remained closed and untenanted for two years

previous to Henri's departure for Camp Devens.

A mysterious killing, said to have been done by a *loup-garou*, or werewolf, had accounted for the desertion of the place. Henri remembered it as an especially well-built two-room cabin of peeled logs—and as such it scarcely could have disintegrated.

The Druot youths looked blank; they had avoided this spot as if it harbored a pestilence. In their narrow lives superstition held a fast hold. Yet they admitted grudgingly that the structure still was there! It had been latched and shuttered against the accidental—and probable—killing of some woodsman who did not know the deadly odor of the place.

The cabin probably was as clean and dry as any—except for that sinister blood spot on the center of the pine floor...

Surely the captain would not think of remaining in such an accursed spot over night? Both boys looked distressed.

As a matter of fact, the captain had not the slightest intention of sleeping or making permanent headquarters in any spot which would become well known to all the dwellers of the woods—and through them, to Jules Barbazonne. Yet he directed that all his remaining effects be brought up to this shunned cabin.

Then he, himself, set out through the untracked woods in quite a different direction. His lips curved in grim satisfaction. At the last he had used subtle indirection and had wormed one bit of information from the two Druot brothers.

"Some one" had warned them that a "revenooer" had come up with the express purpose of capturing all their shinny stills ("shinny" is piney woods

for moonshine whisky) and arresting all the makers of liquor. Since practically every male in the woods made white whisky there was no difficulty securing a detail ready to shoot at sight.

These dwellers of the woods had no knowledge whatever of this newer development, prohibition; they looked upon all sorts of State and Federal enforcement officers simply as kin to the older type of revenooers—and treated them in the same fashion in which all squatting, landless pioneers have treated the encroachments of foreign law and tax-gatherers.

Henri Jugues knew who that sinister some one must be. Yet he was off guard as he trudged up through the woods toward a place he believed would be secret to himself and one other.

Henri came to a slough. There was a rotten cypress stretched across. Adjusting the weight of the musette bag and pack took him a few seconds. Then he tried a first step on the whitened log.

The rotten wood crunched. In spite of being prepared, Henri almost fell, dropping forward with one hand going wrist-deep into the muck.

At that instant sounded the dull explosion of a large-calibered weapon! A heavy slug of lead burned its way across the skin of Henri's right shoulder, ripping the shirt and leaving a mark like the welt of a branding-iron which never could be erased.

Quick as thought Henri understood. Instead of straightening, he threw himself sidewise and back, rolled over, dropping musette bag and pack, then leaped half erect, dodged.

There, shielded to the waist by a thick growth of scrub holly, stood a man in immaculate blue serge and

white linen, a heavy-torsoed fellow—Jules Barbazonne!

On the starched cuff covering his left wrist rested the long barrel of a Colt "horse pistol"—the best weapon he had been able to obtain in a hurry.

Grinning hate and bafflement at having missed that first shot, the strong man swung his aim and fired again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST CHOCTAW.

THE second shot missed. In fact, it went almost a yard wide, splashing into a shallow pool of water where lay a torpid cotton-mouth moccasin, at peace after a satisfactory meal of eighty or ninety tadpoles.

Something stung the deadly snake. Undisputed monarch of the swamps, it had been challenged. An unseen foe had cut off a full three inches of its glorious tail.

The great five-foot moccasin came up fighting, furious. It thrashed, glared, spat foam and venom.

But there was no one to kill, not even a rat or otter. No other snakes. Over there some big blundering animal was making its way in headlong flight.

Had the moccasin known, that blundering animal was Jules Barbazonne—a killer who had no stomach for a show-down with guns; though if his quarry had not been crouching there, holding an automatic pistol, Jules would have leaped upon him with fingers which sought his throat.

In man-to-man combat Jules Barbazonne long had been bully of the woods. He thought himself invincible. It was not even imaginable that a younger man with thews and sinews like manganese spring steel might some day challenge him on his own ground.

Yet, baffled, he did not underrate the killing ability of this youth who had come from the welter of hell where killing was a specialty. *Non!* The next time there would be no mistake, no slip-up. But for now a wise man would get himself out of the way, would flee. Jules fled.

Had it not been for his two packs, invaluable to him now, Henri might have pursued. Yet by the time he had rescued the food and the musette bag from the mire, the strong man was out of sight and hearing.

Trailing any one ready to retaliate was out of the question, since every clump of scrub would afford perfect ambush. And Barbazonne, in spite of his two misses with an unfamiliar weapon, would not fail a third time from short range.

Reluctantly, conscious of the kindling of slow, bitter anger, Henri holstered his pistol and crossed the rotted cypress log.

A few hundred yards beyond the slough, he searched about through crisp brown oak leaves. His way no longer was certain, though he recalled a faint trail which started about at this point.

"*O-hai s'hai-en-a-a!*" (Welcome to you whom I have not seen.)

Henri stopped in his tracks. The calm salutation, given in Choctaw, came from a short distance ahead; yet he could not glimpse the speaker.

The war veteran smiled. He summoned from the recesses of memory a few phrases of the Indian he had learned in childhood.

"I greet you, my brother. I have been far, but I have returned to sit at your fire," he said haltingly. And then, shifting to Cajan, "This is I, Henri Jugues. Are you hidden somewhere ahead of me, Black Warrior?"

"Yes, I am waiting—waiting long. But do not come forward at once. *Ka-wheet—ka-wheet!*" The last was a rather impatient command.

HENRI understood. Up far in this direction he had hoped to locate this ancient Indian and to enlist his help. It was sheer good luck to run across him so soon.

"I shall wait, O son of Tuscaloosa," he said in a low tone, seating himself on the fallen, fungus-shelved trunk of a chinaberry.

Henri knew exactly what was going on ahead—or thought he knew. Since time immemorial the woods Indians had matched their wits and manual skill against the game of the South—the small brown deer, black deer, turkey, quail, doves, opossum and the rest.

Except during the Creek War, when the half-white chieftain William Weatherford (Red Eagle) armed his braves with muskets from captured trading posts, it is doubtful if many of the piney woods Muscogees learned or cared for powder and shot.

Since the forcible removal of the whole tribe to Oklahoma—where the discovery of oil ironically enough gave them Pierce Arrows, Paris silks and palaces of Illinois limestone in exchange for their Alabama woods paradise on which few white men ever have made a good living except through chicanery—even ancient muskets have been denied to the red man.

"*Ka-wheet! Ka-wheet!*"

Again and again came that quail call, and it was answered from deeper in the gloom of the branch. Henri held himself motionless. Out from covert came a dozen or more plump, nodding little bodies, curious, not in the least frightened.

All of a sudden something seemed to whip about their feet. A flutter ensued, then the shuttering of hastily beating wings. The grass-rope noose spilled four of the quail as it tightened, but two of these managed to get free. The other brace could not escape, however, and were hauled swiftly to the brush screen where the redskin had lain in wait.

Henri moved forward now, ready to joke—and perhaps invite himself to a meal of birds, if the Indian's bag was large enough to permit.

The smile died on his lips. There ahead of him something pulled itself in his direction—something that came almost like a frog hops! It was the ancient Indian, little changed as far as his wrinkled countenance, greasy hair, and smoke-blackened, skinny arms were concerned. But this man had no legs below the knees!

"*Hola*, my brother!" the Choctaw greeted, laying aside the headless but still fluttering quail, and raising one blood-stained palm in greeting.

"Black Warrior!" In spite of all the horrors he had known in the trenches, Henri felt a chill of pity and of premonition. "Great Heavens—I—I'm mighty glad to see you. But—"

The words stuck in his throat. Out here—absolutely alone, so far as others of his vanished tribe were concerned—this Choctaw, who had been called old when Henri was a child, clung to life despite some terrible accident.

Doubtless he still boasted as of yore concerning his illustrious ancestor, that great king of the woods who once entertained Hernando de Soto, and for whom a city and a river are named. The last of his race, reduced to snar-

ing quail—and frog-hopping through aisles of the woods where once he trod proudly bearing a shell-bladed mace!

"YOU return to your people." As is the manner of Muscogee dialect, the sentence was a statement rather than a question.

Henri nodded slowly. He seated himself on a fallen log. "Yes, good friend," he replied. "I return to my woods and my people; but first I wished to find you and ask many things. I am out of touch with what has been happening, and I suppose there have been a thousand changes."

"The woods never change; only those change who walk in the woods. The *beneni** climbs still another tree and blossoms there. Its brother withers at the root. The gray moss hangs lower; and then the tree on which it feeds falls into the swamp and another arises."

As he talked the Indian deftly plucked the two quail, which apparently were all he had snared. Then, taking the blade of a pocket knife from which the handle long since had vanished, he made two small incisions. Taking the birds by their necks he whirled them sharply about his head. The viscera flew into the brush; the birds were cleaned. Black Warrior gravely offered one to Henri, but the latter shook his head.

"Two will make but a tiny meal for the great-grandson of a mighty chief. Keep them," he said. "I have food here, some of which I shall be glad to have you try."

Henri opened the pack, extracting therefrom a container of dried beef, a six-ounce jar of cheese and some hard-tack.

*Choctaw rose, Alabama State flower.

As he spread the beef over the hardtack, he saw the Indian tear hungrily at the raw quail, and grinned inwardly. With a knife Henri laid a bit of strong cheese atop the beef on two pieces of hardtack, then offered one to the redskin.

Black Warrior stopped eating, a half-consumed bird in one hand. He accepted the strange article of diet, sniffed, held it undecidedly, watched Henri bite into his piece with evident enjoyment—and then gravely handed back his portion.

"The son of chieftains desires his meat fresh killed!" he said, and munched ahead on the raw quail.

When both had finished Henri drew a cigarette case from his pocket, opened it, and offered one of the paper cylinders to the Indian.

Black Warrior watched with great curiosity as Henri—knowing that these "coffin nails" still were almost unknown in the woods—nonchalantly lighted his own.

The Indian imitated this gesture. He liked tobacco, although little of it had come his way for years. After the first two or three puffs he settled down to solid enjoyment of the fragrant Virginia weed.

In a little while they talked, this time until shadows began to grow long and cover the quack grass and pitcher plants low in the branches. And Henri learned the routine and ordinary happenings of the woods.

Little of outside importance really had occurred during his absence. Children had been born; old men and women had died. A feud had been started and fought to the finish, leaving none of the five participants alive.

The feud had begun over nothing more important than three barrels of shinny mash—yet in the woods, where

corn and the scum from cane boilings was such a serious part of existence, even two or three dollars' worth of mash, and the possession of a still, many a time had cost the lives of two disputing families.

BLACK WARRIOR himself was a sort of human yearbook—one which never went out of print. Yet he had reticences. Henri knew better than to question directly concerning the matters nearest his heart. He surmised that the old Indian guessed at least some of them, but Black Warrior could not be expected to sympathize greatly with white man projects which in time would transform his beloved woods into pecan and camphor groves, citrus plantations, cottonfields and the like. Henri did not mention them.

"If I may ask, O son of chieftains," he inquired at last, "what terrible misfortune has occurred to you in my absence?"

The aged Indian did not answer. His wrinkled, toothless mouth tightened as though a purse-string had been drawn through the lips, and his black eyes slitted. Yet he answered nothing.

"Say!" Henry blurted out after a pause, immensely troubled. "Has this anything to do with the fight for these woods? As I said to you I am here to reclaim them and make them better to live in. Did Jules Barbazonne do this awful thing?"

Silence — enduring for minutes. Henri had begun to be sorry he had asked the question, when suddenly Black Warrior—a pitiable warrior now—got up and threw aside the last bones of his brace of quail.

"Come!" he commanded in a gruff but squeaky voice. And without a backward glance he frog-hopped out

into an almost indiscernible path through the scrub.

His path led no more than a mile, yet it was slow and painful going. Henri stalked alongside, averting his eyes, unable to keep from comparing this pitiful cripple with the proud *minko* (chieftain) he once must have been.

At last they came to a short hill, where the path was lost to any unaccustomed eye. Black Warrior assumed the lead, and fairly dived into an anise thicket, where the close-woven branches closed about him before he had progressed a yard.

Henri dropped to hands and knees as well, forcing his way through the tangle of shrubbery as nearly as possible, in the track of the Indian.

Then a moment later he came into a dark, narrow glade. The faded light of the setting sun revealed a dug-out hut, skin-walled, the palmetto thatch of roof no more than shoulder-high to a tall man. An almost unbearable stench of rotted meat assaulted his nostrils.

Yet Black Warrior was crouching there, holding wide the skin flap of door—a grim, unreadable expression on his seamed and puckered features.

"Welcome, my brother," he said, and motioned with one skinny finger toward the dark interior.

Henri took a long breath of the outdoors air, and entered.

BLACK WARRIOR did not keep him waiting long. A tiny flare still smoldered; this was fanned into flame by slivers and a knot of fat pine. According to Muscogee custom, this fireplace had no outlet for smoke

save a hole at one side of the roof. Therefore, the interior of the hut speedily became chokingly thick with resinous smoke.

Henri shut his eyes and waited. More than once he had been the guest of this old-timer, and he knew that any objection or sign of discomfort merely would serve to dam the gate of possible confidences.

Black Warrior squatted on his lean, crippled haunches in front of the murky flame, which licked up yellow and bluish under his skinny fingers. He passed both hands over the flame. It was not apparent that his hands held anything at all, yet of a sudden the fire leaped higher, changing color to a ghostly greenish hue.

In front of the illumination the squatted cripple became a more forbidding gargoyle, the lines and shadows on his face changing with the metamorphosis of light—becoming demoniac!

There came a queer, monotonous singsong—words in a language all but forgotten even in these reaches of the woods which gave them birth:

"Out of the den of the fox squirrel—
Out of the hollow oak of the horned owl—
Out of the aching tooth of the sick alligator—
Out of the lair of snakes in the valley of rainbow sands—
I ask the spirits of those who are dead,
and those who will kill—"*

In spite of a remembrance of tales told in his boyhood—yarns of the weirdly hypnotic abilities of this old Indian who had inherited all the wisdom of his tribe—Henri found himself gazing wide-eyed and queerly into the garishly colored flame.

*Literal translation of Choctaw medicine man's invocation. The "Valley of Rainbow Sands" is about three miles from Citronelle.

The flame had changed from green: it turned blood red, then crackled and snapped as it shifted into an avid burned orange. As from a distance he heard more words from the medicine man, Henri felt oddly that his own eyes crossed, and now stared down at the tip of his own nose.

"You have come...you have come..."

WHAT the dickens did that droning voice mean—why didn't it go on? Henri shook himself, tried to sit more squarely upright.

The droning voice took its own time, however. Even Henri could not guess the many, many times in the Sweating House—the council house of the Chah'tahs (Choctaws) — that same voice had urged young men to battle or to peace, how many times it had conjured visions of triumph or disaster from the great central fire.

A pungent odor assaulted the visitor's nostrils, overcoming even the incense of the pine. Henri tried to avoid it, crouching lower; yet the not-unpleasant perfume was all-pervading. He found his eyes growing glassy, widening; vaguely he tried to recall something or other he had heard of visions. It made men powerless to move, gave them weird nightmares.

Then through—or in—the veil of smoke, a picture formed! It was small sized, not more than ten or twelve inches square. The skinny hands of the Indian weaved below it, quite as if manipulating strings in some uncanny puppet show.

Henry saw first a gaunt creature which seemed almost the height of a calf—sharp of back, long snouted, with tusks that curled savagely upward. It was an enormous razorback hog. It seemed to be rooting and tearing at the skin wall of an Indian hut.

Of a sudden an Indian appeared from within, bearing a lance. Henri recognized Black Warrior—but this was the old chieftain he had known years back, a man who strode erect and lithe for all the burden of his years.

He launched the lance and it found its mark. The razorback fell kicking. The picture faded. Then it suddenly showed a second man, black coated, who had come up as the Indian was skinning the carcass. An altercation began, the black-clad man gesturing with the barrel of his shotgun at the dead hog. The Indian evidently expostulated. He pointed to the damaged wall of his hut, and rose to his feet. At this moment the newcomer lowered the barrel of his weapon, and shot the Indian through the shins.

The picture vanished. Yet Henri crouched there, dazed.

"For that reason, my son, I keep this skin of the hog." Black Warrior spread out an eighteen-inch square of pliable leather, and passed it into Henri's hands. His voice was stern, unshaking. "Some day I shall sew a beating heart in that skin!"

Staring downward, Henri saw a mark on the hide—a mark every dweller of the woods had come to recognize. It was a stencil brand, a capital B surrounded by four tiny *fleurs-de-lis*, the hog and cattle brand of Jules Barbazonne, uncrowned king of the Cajans!

CHAPTER VII.

ALINE.

HOW long Henri lay unconscious from the effects of the hemp incense, and how many of the remaining hours had been those of natural slumber, he never learned.

He awoke chilly. Under his head the musette bag had been placed as a pillow, and over him a single blanket was drawn. The tough old Choctaw had done this much, but had not considered it any hardship to sleep on the bare clay floor.

The fire was out, Black Warrior gone. One side of the skin wall had been lifted, and through this aperture blew the cool, dew-laden air of dawn.

Henri arose, folding the blanket. "Probably the old fellow is out snaring himself some more quail," he reflected.

His features grew stern as events of that strange native séance returned to memory. He did not dream of doubting the truth of the pictorial narrative conjured from the smoke.

Black Warrior, through drugs and hypnotism perhaps—and with primitive dramatic instinct—had chosen to show instead of tell the events of his crippling, and Henri knew that another black mark of needless cruelty had been added to the record of Barbazonne, the strong man.

The young Cajan left a full half of his food supplies, except the two remaining jars of cheese, to be certain that his red-skinned friend would not go hungry for a few days at least. Then he lifted the lightened pack, the musette bag, adjusted his belt and pistol, and went out to perform scanty ablutions in the waters of a creek.

A little later he built a small fire outside the skin hut—the odors of which never could be conducive to appetite in a white man—and breakfasted.

Fifteen minutes later he made out through the woods, sniffing, breathing deep the freshness of late September sunrise. The lush heaviness of jasmine, magnolia, perspiring anise scrub,

and rhododendron all had vanished with the boiling heat of midsummer.

With all foliage except that of the conifers beginning to turn variegated shades of red, yellow and purple, the piney woods approached their hours of greatest beauty—save possibly for that week or two of late May when dogwood and the ever-present Choctaw rose cover all quieter verdure with blossoms of virgin white.

TRUDGING through sloughs where saw-edged swamp grass came to his knees and the heels of his boots sucked spitefully in the mucilage of wet red clay, vaulting easily over fallen logs that lay waist high as they rotted into the punk and decay of a thousand centuries, Henri trudged happily toward the cabin where the major portion of his outfit now would be cached.

In the magic of sunrise even the tragic revelation of Black Warrior became softened with the optimistic, red-blooded color of sheer animal spirits.

With confidence in himself, born of a truly remarkable body vibrant with strength and health, Henri discounted the attempts which had been made upon his own life. Jules Barbazonne was representative of an old order, an order further out of the modern world than the brass-check system among the white and black loggers who first cruised these woods.

That brass-check peonage in which a laborer never had any cash, was always in debt because forced to buy all of his supplies from the company stores at extortionate prices, had been abolished except in a few out-of-the-way lumber gangs. It belonged to an era coincident with that of leased convict labor—and the hunting of escaped convict-slaves by a pack of hounds

headed by some such infamous and notorious killer as Sweetwater.*

This scheme of things happily had passed. Only in the tabooed Cajan woods did any vestige of it remain; but here Barbazonne ruled with the stern hand of a medieval despot.

Almost every "rhombus shanty" (so-called for their slanting walls by a witty mathematician from Tulane, who went deer hunting), kept what a cowboy of the early West would have called a "stencil iron." That iron bore a capital B three inches high. It likewise showed four small *fleurs-de-lis* surrounding. It was burned upon the shoulder of nearly every calf born in the piney woods, and upon the long, sharp back of nearly every razorback pig.

All Cajans had to live, and shrewdly enough Barbazonne had figured their minimum sustenance. His bargain was this:

"For every three piney woods calves of mine you brand, you may kill a fourth for your family. For every litter of pigs that are branded, you may take your single choice of the lot. Do not cheat, or I shall find you out; my agents are everywhere.

"But never forget that every cow, heifer, bull; every boar, pig and sow, in the whole woods, belongs to me—except on special agreement where the animal or animals may be penned."

What wonder that the Barbazonne wealth had mounted to millions!

ALIGHT step sounded in the palmetto, a few yards to Henri's left. Instantly he froze, immovable as a thoroughbred pointer on the hot scent of a covey. His hand

held the butt of his pistol, and with a *snick* the safety catch was released.

If Barbazonne somehow had contrived to follow the young man with the intention of waylaying him, there would be no dallying. Hot lead fired fast and sure would settle the enmity once for all.

"Who is there?" Henri demanded abruptly, the snarl of hatred of an animal at bay creeping into his resonant voice. "If that's you, Barbazonne—"

"Oh, dear, no, *m'sieu'*!" a frightened girl's voice gave unexpected answer. "It is only I—me, little Aline—don't you remember?"

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Henri. He did remember the girl, chiefly because he had encountered the two Druot brothers on the previous evening. He slid the automatic back into its holster.

"What are you doing, following me?" he added crossly, thinking how close he had been to firing into the brush and asking questions afterward. Had she not remained quiet like a tiny woods mouse, undoubtedly he would have done just that.

Tiny mouse? Well, that was the way he recalled her—shy and scrawny, stringy and unlovely. He had kissed her with complete indifference the day he left the woods for his training at Camp Devens.

And shy she still was, as she came out of concealment of the brush, plucking nervously at pine needles as she passed. Aline Druot, however, had grown to five feet five or six—nearly the same height as Pat Reilly, but how different in every other conceivable way.

Aline was barefooted and bare-

*A mongrel which killed more than forty Negroes before a President of the United States and a Governor of Alabama condemned it to death.

legged, golden tan of skin, coal black of eyes and hair—and the hair had not the slightest suggestion of ripple or luster in it. Her features were thin, a trifle pinched, yet almost classic in their straight regularity.

She wore what was obviously her best dress, a starched pink gingham, spotlessly clean, yet which looked oddly as though it must have shrunk in washing—shrunk in a few of the wrong places, suggesting undeveloped breasts and stringy shanks.

"I—did not follow you, my captain. I—came to meet—to welcome—" she stammered. Dull color flooded up under the swarthiness of her complexion. "I—they said you—you would come—"

"Sure thing!" agreed Henri heartily. He had much business to transact with Père Druot; and it pleased him to imagine that the old Cajan had sent his daughter to welcome their own returning soldier.

He held out one hand and clasped the half-hesitant fingers of Aline—not even noticing how she seemed to shrink back when with all her heart she would have run to him and thrown her arms about his neck in an ecstasy of maidenly happiness; nor did he observe that the young girl's fingers were icy cold, while her face grew scarlet beneath the brown.

WITH all his heart and thoughts of love given to the beautiful Patricia Reilly back in Mobile, he might have passed like a somnambulist at midnight through the love groves of Babylon's hanging gardens, and have noticed nothing feminine to attract his personal curiosity.

And though another year or two would make Aline Druot the most personable and attractive maiden of the

piney woods, Henri Jugues saw her not at all.

Men of his sort—officers who looked on the mad wartime whirl of gayety at Paris, Tours, Cologne, Coblenz as an interesting spectacle, surrendering not one iota of self-respect even to the provocative hours of *café* or *estaminet*—were apt to be like that; to love once and once only.

"Who told you I was coming—your brothers?" asked Henri. "I met them yesterday. They took up my outfit to the old cabin on Sands Creek."

Aline nodded slowly, then jerkily, as if to emphasize. "Yess-s!" she breathed.

A sudden daring, totally unlike her, came into the girl. "You—you kiss me when you go away?" She lifted her black, flashing eyes for a split second to his. "Now—you kiss me, maybe, you come back? I—me, I—pray for you!"

The man looked at her slowly. He took her by the thin, brown elbows. His expression clouded; of course it was silly, but it *did* look as if this kid had remembered him, and made something of a hero of a non-combatant engineer.

"Why yes, honey," he said thoughtfully. "I was out in No Man's Land a couple of times, stringing wire. Maybe your prayers pulled me through."

He did not say that he had been wounded on both of those occasions of wire-stringing.

"And I sure am glad you thought enough of me to pray. . . . I want to see your father; but first, since you're the only kid who's done better than look for me with a gun, I sure will kiss you! Thank you for your prayers, little one!"

With that he took her slowly into a

strong embrace; kissed her hair, her black eyebrows, her cheeks, and lastly the poppy-red lips which parted for him in the delight of a moment never to be duplicated by this girl of the woods in the whole of her lifetime.

Henri had to untangle himself from a convulsive embrace. Now he had begun to understand a trifle, and was troubled.

"Aline!" he expostulated. "Please, Aline!"

But words meant nothing to the girl of the wilds who held to him with all her wiry strength, burying her face against his chest—then sobbing uncontrollably when the man quietly but surely disengaged himself.

"I'm sorry, dear girl," he said then. "Let's go along to your father. I have to talk to him—and likewise to Gustav and Pierre."

He took up his packs and turned into the scrub, not looking back. The girl followed, three paces in the rear. There was a shine of glory in her face which could not be dimmed by tears, even by knowledge that the man of her whole girlhood dreams could not, would never be hers.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CAVE IN THE HILLS.

DOWN in the reaches of the woods a telephone wire swayed between sagging poles. It was the only connection between the county seat of Chatom and the world to southward.

Two men came toward the wire where it sagged to the ground. One of them was clothed in tattered overalls. He seemed to grin perpetually, but that was because of buck teeth which pushed out and upward his long and ape-like upper lips. His hair, grayish

white in spite of his twenty-four years, came over his eyes and almost to the end of his nose.

Yet he hitched up a field telephone set and tuned in—no difficulty, except with the old maid central who wanted to know this and that and eleven other things; she was the gossip sheet, with extras, who supplied Citronelle and the woods.

But finally the big man in the black coat took the pocket sender-receiver, a continental type telephone. He thrust it to his left ear and mouth.

"Zat ze Reilly place in Mobile?" he bellowed.

"Yes," came back the half-frightened voice of Patricia Reilly.

"*Bon!* I jes' wan' say," the man went on with cruel unction, "We 'ave 'ad ver' bad accident. Young man call for you—then he die. His name I don' know. He tall—ver' ugly—not know mooch about woods."

Over the wire came a quick sob, and then a clear if unsteady voice. "You're a liar! You're Jules Barbazonne, aren't you? Well, I don't and *won't* believe you! And I'll be up as soon as my father can get a corps of militia together! We'll hand you to the—"

That was where Jules Barbazonne snapped off his connection, grinning. Long he had wished for a chance at this incomparable red-head. Now it seemed that she was coming his way. All he had to do now was to get rid of this thorn and nuisance, Henri Jugues, and then kill the father of Patricia Reilly. If the girl ever came alone up into the woods—

HENRI knew nothing at all of this, of course. With Aline at his heels—three paces in back, for all the world like a broken and dutiful squaw—the visitor made his way

through the tangled brush another mile. And there was the cabin to which he had asked the Druot brothers to bring the main part of his outfit.

Henri found his stuff piled neatly in one corner of the log shack. Had it not been for Barbazonne, Henri would have used this place as headquarters. But as matters stood, with all of the Cajan woods apprised of his home-coming, he did not consider this for an instant.

"Aline!" he called over his shoulder.

There was no answer. He looked back. The girl had disappeared, had plunged into the depths of a swamp, there to throw herself and her best Sunday dress down into the leaf mold; to sob out her love for a man who looked at and through her—quite as if she had been a mere pine tree—who kissed her and then thrust her aside.

But even as she wept, Aline could smile through her tears, and blush again at remembrance of that single embrace . . .

At the old cabin Henri refilled his food pack, and added a few small articles he had brought as presents for the elder Druots. Then he struck out for the small farm and cabin where this family dwelt.

He came upon old Père Druot and Gustav harvesting ears of corn in the scant acre of clearing. Nearer the cabin the young son, Pierre, was spading around some gaunt stalks of Brussels sprouts, in a truck patch surrounded by a fence of split pine pickets held together by wire—a necessary "herd law" precaution against roving cattle and hogs.

Père Druot gravely acknowledged the newcomer's hearty greeting.

"We are indeed happy that the war spared you, my boy," he said, shaking hands. "I fear that there will be scant

welcome of the sort you deserve, up here among us. Bad times are come to the woods!"

He nodded his white head slowly and an expression of melancholy settled on his gentle, kindly features. "Gustav has told me of what has occurred; and I thank the just God that neither of my sons committed an act of violence mistakenly."

Henri passed off this pessimism lightly. He was full of jest and animal exuberance. He led the way up to the cabin, hailing Pierre on the way, stopping to quaff a dipper of cold well water—pretending not to note the hesitance and gloom in the father's attitude.

The two boys, though silent, were much more ready to accept and listen to him. In their veins ran a hardier, more venturesome blood of pioneers—a fraction more of the warlike Choctaw strain, perhaps.

Two women were in the three-room cabin when the men arrived—wiry, bent Mère Druot, who was down on hands and knees, scrubbing the yellow pine floor with a brush of hog bristles and soft soap heavy with lye; and Gran'mère Lestrade, her mother, who crouched on a wooden settle by the fireplace, motionlessly watching the cheery flames playing about the base of the great cast iron soup kettle.

Henri greeted both, kissing them after the woods custom on the forehead. Then as Père Druot and the two boys came in, silent and somewhat troubled, Henri brought out three red half-pound tins of a popular mild tobacco. To each tin was fastened a block meerschaum pipe with cherry-wood stem. He presented one to each of the women, and the third to Père Druot.

For the two boys he had a pair of

German spade bayonets—the broad blades which early in the war were used as intrenching tools as well as lethal instruments in charging trenches and “mopping up.”

The women promptly sat down and filled their pipes with the fragrant weed, while Henri lighted a cigarette. The two boys, eyes shining, went out, with mumbled thanks, to whet up their huge knives to razor edges.

Only Père Druot did not smoke. He sat down, looking disconsolate—a little broken in spirit, it seemed. Henri chose to disregard this for the time being; he had to make allies of this family, one much more thrifty than most dwellers of the woods, and one most of all likely to understand at least a part of his ambitious project.

HE talked. First of all he drew for them a picture of the war as he had seen it, and—this solely because he knew full well the dramatic and human sympathy value of such tokens among simple folk—showed them the two puckered scars which had been his souvenirs of non-combative action, wire-stringing.

There was no doubt of the impression his vivid recital made upon these Cajans. By and by the two boys came back silently, and seated themselves crosslegged on the floor, listening to every word with eyes ashine. A little later a girl who wore a stained pink dress crept in and sat in shadow, so that none could detect that her eyes were red from weeping.

In time Henri, who possessed a straightforward eloquence in speaking to those he knew and with whom he deeply sympathized, drew the narrative into different channels. He spoke of his own training, his own aims and ambitions.

Hours passed. Mère Druot arose and made preparations for dinner; yet she missed scarcely a word of this explanation, which at times arose almost to the pitch of impassioned harangue.

Even Père Druot forgot his fears, his pessimism. He fumbled as he opened his red tin of tobacco, and put to his mouth the stem of the cheap little pipe, but forgot to light it.

The boys understood only slightly what all this was about camphor grafting, citrus and pecan orchards, more corn to the acre, and variegated crops like cotton, soya beans, and so on—they little realized what it could mean to them personally, but they were carried away. Their mouths gaped.

Out of the shadow a brown, bare-legged girl whose eyes shone now, red no longer, hunched closer—a little closer—until she sat unnoted at the feet of her hero.

The love of a primitive folk for listening to a sustained exposition—no matter if it were evangelical religion or the impassioned yowling of an Esperanto zealot—converted this audience. When they broke bread, the hands of Père Druot were shaking. He mumbled in his beard.

All the rest were dumb. Even Henri found it hard to take up the thread of light discourse, though he did turn to the women and tell them a few facts he had observed, concerning the manner in which French gentlewomen like themselves, now were dressing in oh so abbreviated skirts, and brazenly parading on the Boul' Mich'.

After dinner, Henri took Gustav and Pierre, and returned to the cabin where he had cached his supplies. He talked confidentially to the pair of boys, who had turned hero worshippers.

He, Henri, normally would trust

any one in the whole piney woods. But now he had a real enemy, a man who would stop at nothing to achieve his ends. Did the boys know one of those caves up in the Salt Hills—one that would be dry and hard to find?

They did. Well, would they take the bulk of his outfit up there? For himself Henri would not bother much; he would sleep in the woods, a different place each night—unless the woods dwellers offered him accommodation.

"You—" Gustav started to speak, then colored. He dug a bare toe into the dirt.

"Yes?" encouraged Henri.

"I—I would be proud, me, if you—you would take my bed!" stammered the Cajan, crimsoning with a feeling half of pride, half of shame.

Henri dropped one arm about the lad's shoulders. "Thank you, Gustav!" he said with emphasis and meant it. "I'd take you up in one minute—except I don't want any harm to befall *père, mère or gran'mère*—you understand? I have an enemy who is very powerful? You know?"

The lad nodded. There was nothing more to say. Loyalty to family transcends all else, among the Cajans. And in the bitter decade just past they had tasted the wrath of the mighty Barbazonne.

So it was that early in the afternoon Henri returned alone to the Druot place. There he demonstrated to Père Druot the almost inexplicable mystery of tree grafting.

The sons of Père Druot, wearing their new bayonet spade knives without sheaths—and carrying shotguns—were on their way, each with approximately ninety pounds of pack from the indomitable little roadster up six miles to the dry cave of the Salt Hills, where Henri would make secret head-

quarters. Let any one try to interfere with them in their trust!

FOUR days passed. Henri had disappeared. The second day following the morning when the ex-captain had told the Druots of the war and of his plans, Barbazonne rode up arrogantly.

He was accompanied by Catfish Joe, a queer vapid-faced youth of twenty-four, who had grayish-white hair and buck teeth—who seemed always to be grinning, though there was not even saturnine mirth in his soul.

The youth carried a new ribbed Remington double-barrel; now and then he fondled its cool oily blueness against his dirty cheek.

In answer to a question, Père Druot admitted that M. Jugues had stopped at his home, but told nothing more. Even the snarled menace of a threat from the king of the Cajans—a flourished pistol, too—had no effect. It was the simple truth that Père Druot had not seen where Henri had gone. If he guessed, that now was his affair.

He, both old women, Aline and the two boys all hated Barbazonne with a passion this half-cold ruler of the woods might have found difficult to understand.

If Henri himself had been compelled to perform all of his economic missionary work alone, the task would have taken months or years. The Cajan shanties were hidden at wide intervals through the woods—and few, indeed, of this folk possessed the open-mindedness and understanding of Père Druot.

Druot could read English, which was unusual, since there were no schools for Cajans in all of Alabama or Mississippi. So the newcomer left with him a few publications from the Depart-

ment of Agriculture, and Père, before the evening fires, read from them to his family.

News travels wide and fast in the woods. After the first day of field work, Henri found that he was recognized and expected. Little by little, sleeping out by himself nights, assembling a dozen or half dozen Cajans to watch his demonstrations and listen to his gospel of economic salvation—preached in terms of bolts of cloth, of bushels of corn, of new shotguns—he made a wide circle which roughly corresponded to the boundaries of Washington County.

Henri did not make the mistake of attacking Barbazonne—though here and there he encountered unmistakable hostility on the part of a few mistakenly in sympathy with the powerful woods baron.

AT the Lescault place one afternoon he had completed a demonstration of grafting, and had told eighteen or twenty assembled Cajans simple means of using burned palmetto leaves to increase the corn yield, when Nori Lescault began to heckle the visitor.

Nori was a big, rawboned youth who sold his output of "shinny" to the Negroes and less particular whites around Citronelle. The protests of his father and younger brother barely managed to keep the bully quiet during Henri's demonstration.

Suddenly Nori roared out a fighting name and rushed for the newcomer.

Surprised and caught off balance, Henri barely was able to save himself from the crushing hitch-kick launched sidewise at his head. He ducked, sprang aside, his overseas cap brushed away. Then he caught Nori's left leg

in mid-air as the right passed over, and with an upward wrench sent the young woods bully hurtling backward to land on his head and shoulders.

The sand was soft, and Nori was unhurt. He rolled over and scrambled out of the way—expecting, of course, that Henri would follow up his advantage and leap upon him with boots in the manner of the *savate*.

The newcomer had learned other and cleaner methods of fighting, however. As Nori sprang again, Henri dodged, keeping out of his way, while the bully cursed savagely at being unable to set himself for a kick at the groin or head of this strangely elusive opponent.

The male Cajans, immensely enjoying this sort of combat, shouted adjurations to Nori. Though most of them would have enjoyed seeing him soundly defeated, they audibly disapproved of the manner in which Henri danced in and out like a boxer, feinting, leaping away—and finally catching the vigorous but awkward Nori off balance.

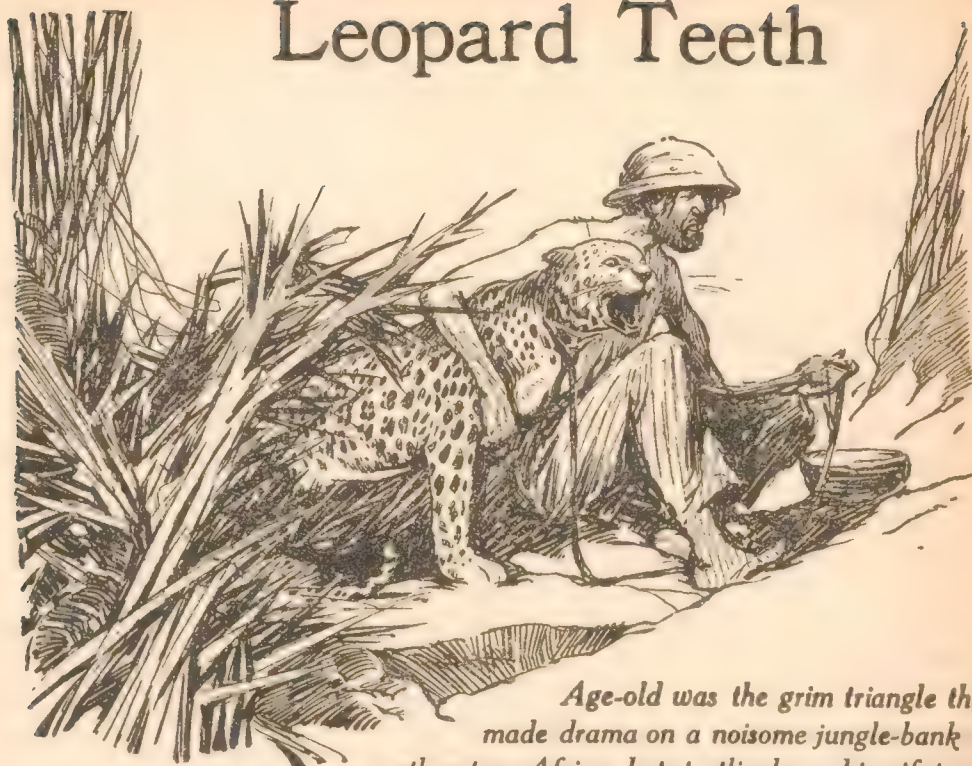
Then came three swift steps, a lunging right uppercut which started at Henri's waist. The blow, perfectly timed and aimed not to break bones, caught the bare-throated Cajan full on the projecting Adam's apple and under side of the heavy jaw.

With breathing suddenly paralyzed, and his brain stunned by the heavy impact, Nori stood there a moment, black eyes protruding, knees suddenly wilting beneath him. Then he sat down with a gasping grunt, and fell over sidewise, not unconscious, but completely *hors de combat*.

"*Mon Dieu!*" one of Nori's brothers muttered aloud, palpably admiring. "I t'ink now we listen some more, eh?"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Leopard Teeth



Age-old was the grim triangle that made drama on a noisome jungle-bank in southeastern Africa; but startlingly and terrifyingly new was the game that was played, to the mad throbbing of tom-toms

By THEODORE ROSCOE

YELLOW and green. Black and red. It takes colors to waken memory. Recollection would be stirred by sound or smell. But the sounds—the pulsing throb of devil drums beating across the gloom, the hiss of a python slipping through tall spear grass, the plop of a crocodile dropping into murky water—and that putrid stench of spoiling vegetation (and humanity)—could be approximated nowhere else on earth.

It remains for a sight of yellow against green, red against black, to carry me once again to that foul coast which lies, a festering sore, on the southeast edge of Africa.

Yellow and green for the jungle rot-

ting under torrid skies, the sluggish river slinking among fat trees, the bilious fever swamps, the perverted daylight leaking through screens of lush foliage. Red and black for the cotton-thick jungle night pricked by native camp fires, the flare of resin torches alarming the hot dark, or the glow of reflected flame gleaming in sweat-wet, ebony Negroid cheeks.

Evil colors, those—the hues of that hell which lies below the sick Zambezi River in Portuguese East Africa, Mozambique. Those colors paint the background of this story. But then there was another color. *Gold!* The gold that lured Brander Haggot and Enoch Rice and the woman. The gold that

sent one of them to an ugly death. There are strange and terrible ways of dying in Mozambique. This was one of the strangest and most terrible. Here is the story; and a queer, grim story it is. . .

FUNNY how you will reëncounter people to prove the world is a small place, after all. I met Enoch Rice, and saw his wife and Brander Haggot in Singapore two years before I started running the Asian Witch up Mozambique Channel, two million miles away.

Rice was a dentist, and a good one. If a chap was unfortunate enough to be in Singapore and have an aching molar at the same time, he took popular advice and hunted out the little white shop on Prince Edward's Lane.

In those days it was mighty hard to find a good dentist east of the Suez Canal; and the gray little man on Prince Edward's Lane in Singapore had the reputation of a wizard. He must have been making a pile of money. Ship captains, wealthy natives, government officials and their discontented wives crowded his office. I cruised into Singapore with a bad wisdom tooth, and the mate of the Indo-China packet sent me to Rice. He did not even flaunt the title of D.D.S.

He should have won a knighthood for his faultless and painless technique, but he was just the ordinary sort of man who melts in a crowd or a group of four. Meek blue eyes, chestnut hair, expressionless mouth in a face made pallid by too much tropics, quinine and curry powder.

He might have been twenty-eight or thirty-eight. A trifle stoop shouldered; given to leanness, agile hands, and positive genius at repairing one's faulty dental equipment.

I remember thinking that somewhere back in his family an ancestor might have been "touched with the tar brush." Perhaps it was the darkness of his fingernails which implied a trace of Eurasian blood. Certainly he was mild, reserved and unobtrusive in the best English tradition. As he was the kind one would never speculate about, afterwards, I recalled him chiefly for his nice extraction of my tooth. Later, I was to remember him well enough!

Brander Haggot entered Rice's office while I was in the chair. Haggot was some sort of agent for the old Peninsular and Oriental, and Rice's friend. He was not the man to be lost in a group of four or a crowd of four hundred. He was muscle slabbed and big, and endowed with the confidence that accompanies size and two hundred pounds. I remembered him for his magnificent chest and the laugh that boomed out of it, the massive automatic that could be seen nestling in the shoulder holster under his drill jacket, and his face.

It was a large face under a blowzy shock of sandy hair, and it might have been handsome but for the sharp gleam of the narrow eyes and the startling glitter of the four upper front teeth which were gold.

It is a sardonic enough thing to realize that Enoch Rice had made those same gold teeth!

THE following afternoon I returned to Rice's dental parlor for a jaw treatment. A little early, my call was unexpected. The outer office was deserted, and the native attendant nowhere to be seen. But something was going on in the inner room; something mighty important, by the sound of things.

Unnoticed, I lounged in a chair near the outer door; picked up a frayed copy of *Punch* and tried to read. The rattan screen, dropped across the door to the inner office, stirred open at a breath of warm wind. I saw a woman's face. I heard a basso voice utter the magic word: "Gold!"

"Gold!" came the voice. Brander Haggot's voice. "Enough to make us millionaires, I tell you. Listen to me, Enoch Rice! The man who stakes a claim in there will make a king's fortune. This native who brought me the report wouldn't lie. He wouldn't dare. Vasco Joao had started working the stuff before he died. Placer mining. There's his letter, and there's the dust to prove it. The Portuguese knew what he was about. For Lord's sake, Enoch, don't throw down the chance of a lifetime!"

Then Rice's cautious rejoinder: "But it's so blasted far away, Brander! A devilish place to get to."

"So's the end of any rainbow! Think, man—a couple of millions in gold dust lying around for the finding. May take us time, that's so. But you got the money to finance it. You could buy six outfits, and you know it. Come in with me, fellow, or you'll always regret it. Will you put up the funds? Come! We can't haggle all day. Will you do it?"

"But my wife? Look here, Lyda; you've always hated the tropics like the devil. That place will be worse. You—"

The woman's laugh was low, carrying a note of excitement. "Oh, Enoch, don't be a fool. Brander's giving us the chance. We *must* go with him. I've told you fifty times already I'd like it. Go, Enoch. Go!"

Circe must have owned a voice like that. It was a voice conjured to make

of a man an obedient plaything. Low and tense and throaty, at once a command and a wheedle, it could have started a man across a lake of fire to find a bauble, could have made a fool of a philosopher.

Then Brander Haggot's laugh was a taunt. "Hang it, Rice, you've got a fortune to gain and damned little to lose. I know you can put up the money without battin' an eyelash. Your wife is game. You hear what she says. Take her word for it, old boy, an' mine, too. Will you do it?"

Then Rice's murmur, an excited exclamation from the woman and a boomy guffaw from Haggot:

"That's the stuff. Knew you wouldn't throw down an ol' friend an' the chance of your life. Great! We'll get under way at once. Just the three of us. I got my eye on the very schooner we want to take us over. I'll handle it all, old boy, you got nothin' to do but come along, see? Leave it to me! We'll all be rich! Gold—"

The rattan screen billowed outward on the wind that poured from an open window, and this time I won a glimpse of the whole scene that was afterward to seem like the first act of the drama. I was not to forget that brief picture. Haggot and Rice and Rice's wife were posed like actors on a stage.

The big agent and Rice had their backs toward the door, the dentist being seated at his desk. The woman stood at the window, her figure outlined in the blazing sunshine.

I tell you this sight of her robbed me of breath, for it is not often one sees a beautiful woman. The phrase is trite and time worn, but no other words could describe her. Her Junoesque figure was stark in a clinging white garment. She gestured with her white parasol like a manikin, and her

arched white throat was carved. Her face was striking, like that of the goddess Hera in marble; but it wasn't marble by any means. Her petulant, rose-lipped mouth looked moist and promising. Her wide blue eyes smiled mockery for innocence; and her hair, piled above small ears, was a tumble of gold in sunlight.

Good Lord, what a lady she was! Bold figured and big, with a pouty red mouth and solid gold hair, she could have broken up a prayer meeting or panicked a monastery. How in the world had the little gray dentist on Prince Edward's Lane managed to lead such a lady to the altar? No doubt his bank account had helped.

I would have gaped had my position not been precarious. But she did not see me. She was bending an unfathomable gaze on Brander Haggot. The big man straightened his stalwart shoulders and leaned toward her. Enoch Rice was bent over a scratching pen. The big man and the woman were looking at each other.

Rice sighed, holding out a paper.

"There's a check."

Abruptly two things occurred to me. It occurred to me that Brander Haggot might seriously resent the fact of an outsider overhearing his plans for a gold hunt; so I picked up my cap and departed the office in haste and discretion. This occurred to me, also: The three of them were trekking off somewhere by themselves. Could not some of the gold that Brander Haggot hoped to win be found in Mrs. Rice's hair?

LONG, hard working hours and meager pay has always been a shibboleth with the British merchant marine. When my ship made port in Cape Town I quit my job as

bosun and gave "standing four on and four off" as the reason. However, there was another inducement. An old mariner friend wanted me to run his trading schooner up the Mozambique coast to pick up poached ivory, deliver mail, and carry supplies to some of those God-lost backwaters in Portuguese East. Adventure!

I sailed the Asian Witch out of Port Natal, up the rim of Gazaland, and into a river that could have led to the underworld.

It did.

The hedge of jungle bordering the bay shore was a lusting mouth, the coiling river a throat. Yellow and green. But the daylight yellow was tainted by the steam drifting up in the hot air; the jungle was the color of grass sprouting out of garbage; the squirming river, dappled with lily pads and whorls of scum, ran water the green of a sick man's cheek.

The tidy white schooner did not belong on that hothouse spillway. That sneaking channel was a place for crocodiles and sleepy hippos, rotting logs, poisonous vines, diseased trees. Dis-mal cranes and pelicans flapped along the swampy shore. Serpents fat as a man's arm were ropes of death coiled on the steaming mud banks. Bulbous spiders drifted by, riding floating mats of leaves. One wondered if one's ears were deaf from quinine, or if the stagnant quiet was real.

The Asian Witch wandered up the flood, and the jungle closed in on her stern. I slapped at mosquitoes, panted in the heat, and dourly wondered what human being could be living in this fever hole long enough to acquire a load of ivory for the shipping. The river meandered with a maddening unconcern for time or the troubles of navigating a schooner powered by a

senile gas engine; and the steaming, drugged afternoon dragged.

The sun was westering when the Swahili boy standing lookout on the bow hallooed that the town was in sight, and I swung the Asian Witch into the broad lagoon that made an elbow in the river.

I'd raised some unhealthy ports in my life, but that jungle village squatting on the mud banks was the most uninviting spot I had ever seen. From a distance the native huts rambling down the shore looked like beehives set out in the sun to rot. A larger hut than the rest, obviously the local meeting-house—no Christian institution in that black community—commanded the center of a clearing fenced in by pointed stakes.

A collapsing tin shed and a collapsed tin wharf sprawling at water's edge reminded of the days before the government at Lisbon forgot that Portugal owned Mozambique. The scribble of trash-strewn, muck-running lanes filled with pickaninnies, goats and hens, the rank green jungle closing in on all sides, the fevery mist that hung like thin fog over the town, spoke good reason for Portugal's forgetting the place.

I brought the Asian Witch around, and the entire population of the village, including the goats and hens, crowded the rotten wharf. By no means did I like the looks of the reception committee, and I wasn't slow in making a display of the automatic in my belt.

The schooner slid into a slip alongside the wharf that was like a sewer and the black natives set up a gabble. The women, naked as Eve and ninety times as ugly, didn't make any difference; but the male population looked like a deportation from hell.

It was a crowd to make one's flesh crawl, I can swear to that. Black bodies glistened with grease. Brass bracelets jangled on skinny arms and toothpick legs under bloated stomachs. Every body and face was made hideous by cicatrized tattooing, scarred with slit lips, nose rings, bone spikes thrust through the nostrils. Shiny, ebony masks, grotesque as nightmares. Some wore chunks of glass stabbed through the lower lip. Several affected hoops set in the mouth like a pelican's bill.

Their protuberant eyes bulged like pools of milk in their knobby heads. Chicken feathers, rags of monkey skin, parrot plumes did for clothing. More than one grin betrayed a row of filed teeth to mark the owner a witness of cannibalistic rites. A nice crowd to meet with the sun going down!

MY Swahili boy was as uneasy as I happened to be, and I saw him fumbling his *juju* bag, no doubt to ward off a plunge into a cooking pot. Automatic in hand, I was prepared to address the grinning, malodorous crowd, when I saw a sun helmet bobbing to the fore. This must be the agent supposed to meet me.

He elbowed his way through the smelly press of unlovely savages, and shambled down the wharf's edge, gesturing. When I saw it was Enoch Rice, the Singapore dentist I had met two years before, I got a real shock.

The two years had dealt unkindly with the man. He looked almost shrunken in his shapeless cotton suit; round-shouldered; aging. A shock of hair straggled down his forehead. His mouth was pale. His chin was blue with lack of shaving. He wore neither shirt nor collar, and but for the mild blue eyes and nervous smile I might not have recognized him.

"I'm late," he greeted. "Haggot told me t' stand by an' look for you. I say, friend, you haven't a spot of whisky on deck, eh? Got a drink handy? Yeh. Haggot says you would be bringin' in a few kegs for us. Y'might just pass me a drink if there's any about."

He stood at the beam rail of the schooner, and his voice was an alcoholic gust.

A minute I stood too surprised to reply. Rice balanced there, fumbling his hands, and the swarm of barbarians waited behind him while the jungle, ripe with amber twilight, waited back of them. I was remembering the little office back on Prince Edward's Lane; the picture of Rice hunched over his desk; the big man, Haggot, looming beside him; his wife posing in front of a sun-flooded window.

Gold! They had talked of gold. All that two years ago. Rice's wife had been a statue of Juno come to life, vibrant-voiced. And the man, Haggot, was big and blond with gold teeth.

Big and blond and the gold teeth gleaming in his mouth, Haggot appeared. There was a sudden commotion among the natives, a cessation of chatter and a scramble of bare feet. Brander Haggot wasn't elbowing his way through that black gathering. The dark-skinned devils made haste to stand aside. A lane opened up before the towering sun helmet, and the stalwart Haggot came striding down the wharf.

The two years had not worn Brander Haggot. If anything it had wedged more muscles on his enormous shoulders and given an added thrust to his chin. His face had tanned to the color of cordovan leather, and his loud voice carried a note of command that made those black Africans kowtow. The

man's personality spoke power, brute force, fearlessness. The figure of Rice seemed to fade in Haggot's presence.

"Ahoy the schooner," he boomed. Rice was shouldered, literally and figuratively, out of the way. "Come to pick up those *boxes of dirt*, have you? We've been looking for you. I'll have my boys board you in th' morning and carry off the supplies. We'll do business to-morrow. Meantime come on up to our bungalow. It's good to see a white man, damn it! I'm Haggot. Brander Haggot." He clapped a palm hard on Rice's shoulder. The smaller man reeled. "This is my partner, Enoch Rice."

Something in the way he had slapped his companion's back, something in his tone of voice, implied contempt.

He had said "*boxes of dirt*" with marked emphasis. My employers had said "*ivory*." I was quick enough to guess that Haggot was poaching the stuff and shipping it in packing boxes; didn't want the natives to learn about it. It seemed to me there would be mighty little chance of the Portuguese government trying to enforce law in that forsaken hole, but I said nothing.

Haggot got me by the arm and steered me up the wharf, asking questions, and Rice drifted along behind, inconspicuous and half drunk.

Haggot wanted me to spend the night in their bungalow, and to this I agreed. It would be interesting to follow up this little drama I had chanced upon in Singapore. Had I guessed how it was soon coming to a climax, I might have been less anxious to learn of it!

A CLEARING had been chopped out of the jungle at the far edge of the town, and the bungalow was a tribute to white man's ingenuity. It certainly was an attrac-

tive little place for such a rotten locale. Haggot occupied a sort of annex; Rice and his wife lived in the larger portion, and there was a spacious living room, screened and cool.

I gathered that Rice had footed the building costs and that his wife had added the feminine touch to give it a semblance of home. Certainly Haggot's quarters were comfortable and the screened-in veranda pleasantly shadowed by a large baobab tree.

We sat on the veranda with whiskies, buried there in blue-black African night, the jungle whispery around us. Haggot monopolized the conversation; and I marveled at Mrs. Rice who could lounge so coolly complacent with glass and cigarette—a voluptuous, vibrant goddess of legendary beauty remaining rose-fresh in a land where pine boards rotted in a day. She surely didn't inspire churchy thoughts by her habit of lowering her eyes, arching her lips and murmuring.

Rice—she called her husband by his last name—was a forgotten wraith smiling fatuously, wordless in an out-of-the-way corner. Lyda Rice turned her promising smile at me or Brander Haggot, but she was attentive to her husband to this extent—she never let his whisky glass go empty. After the fifth, the gray man's meek eyes filmed and his smile was a fixture.

Haggot's talk was loud. He told me how *he* had built this bungalow.

"And we come out here lookin' for gold, friend. We'll find it some day. Been here a couple years now. Placer mining up these lousy creeks. Rice washes for ore about a mile from here. My camp is ten miles up the river." His tone said that Rice had it soft, while he, Haggot, was hard-boiled enough to work a tough claim far in the hinterland.

"I been shippin' boxes of dirt down to Durban to have 'em analyzed by a geologist there," Haggot went on. "Reckon we can keep you busy totin' that muck for another year. But I hope to hit a pay load soon; eh, Rice?"

Rice nodded dully. I wondered why Haggot pursued the pretense of shipping dirt in those long packing cases. Weren't the little dentist and his wife in on the ivory poaching, too? Perhaps Haggot was working the game alone on the side. I wondered; and knew enough not to ask.

"These black tribesmen in here are a wild-looking lot," I made comment. "Look like decadent Bantus or Zulus to me. My Swahili boy was scared to death of 'em. Must give you the creeps to live so near that village. They look damned dangerous."

Haggot spat, and held out a fist like a bludgeon. "Pah! You see that, friend? They've felt it. They may be savages, but they know who's boss of these woods, you bet! They don't monkey with *me*!"

Lyda Rice made a lithe shift in her chair. "They're just terrified to death of Brander," she told me. A lazy ribbon of smoke drifted from her pursed lips, and she smiled at Haggot with veiled eyes. "Brander shot a lion the first day we arrived. And he knocked over a black for standing within three feet of me. I don't like that horrid witch-doctor, Umzizi, who lives in the village, and Brander told him never to show his face in front of me. He doesn't, either. Brander killed another lion, and the village has made him a sort of king. Haven't they, Brand?"

"They'd better have," he growled. "I've been in African jungles before, friend, and I know how to handle these babies. Make 'em think you're a god, see? The village just about worships

me, now. I make those niggers step fast for me, too. An' they do. I'm big medicine around here. If any man in these woods laid a hand on me, those natives would tear him to shreds for doing it." He chuckled. "Yeh. They've made me a king."

A bony-kneed black wobbled out of the bungalow with a fresh supply of soda water and bowed and kowtowed most respectfully to Haggot before retiring. When the glasses were to be filled again, it was discovered that Enoch Rice had slipped out of his chair and disappeared.

"RICE is getting tight, again," his wife said with a disparaging smile, laying a smooth hand on my arm. "You've no idea how drunk the little man keeps himself. Hates it out here, you know. We all hate it, of course, but the thing to do is stick it out." Her smile was that of the cheerful martyr. "I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't for Bra—Mr. Haggot, here, and the few visitors who come up on river boats. Rice spends most of the time at his horrid placer mine or tramping in the jungle. I tell him he's going native, poor dear. Now he's gone out back to see his leopard cub. He found the creature in a trap and insists on keeping the beast around. Rather sit with that silly animal than visit with human beings. You really must excuse him; won't you?"

And Haggot chuckled: "Rice used to be a dentist." He found humor in this. "Can you imagine a tooth-wrecker barging off into jungles after gold and bringin' his wife to a hole like this? So far the only gold Rice has seen around here is some we brought with us." He grinned, and tapped a fingernail on the four gold front teeth in his upper jaw. "The

gold on them teeth. Rice made 'em for me, himself."

A plaintive sigh escaped Mrs. Rice; her shoulders made a gliding movement as she turned to the whisky tray; then she held up a hand. "Listen!"

Haggot halted a reach for a cigarette; and I sat up in my chair. Now we could plainly hear the sound, stealing through the opaque dark that made a black curtain outside the veranda screen.

Room-booma-boom! Room-booma-boom!

Somber, insistent, cadent. The measured throb of a *dingwinti* drum undertoned by the sullen beat of a tom-tom. Secure on the lamp-lit veranda, I had forgotten Africa. Now it was calling to be remembered. No sound in the world is as weird and blood-stirring as the primitive music of African devil-drums pulsing through the night.

Rooma-boom-boom! A sound to make your hair stiffen.

"They're dancing," Mrs. Rice whispered. Haggot nodded. The sound gained volume, augmented by chanting voices, the rattle of *juju* gourds, the stamp of bare feet on beaten earth. Haggot pointed; and I looked beyond the dark trunk of the baobab tree, across the compound.

A thin growth of jungle separated that end of the compound from the outer edge of the village down on the river. The night had been thick in there. Now the solid dark was loosening in a misty red haze. The haze brightened, and became a blaze dancing behind the scatter of trees.

Louder and louder sounded the devil-drums, the crackle of gourds, the stamp of feet, the chanting. The fire grew as if fed by the noise. Flame-tongues flickered, tossing a scarlet glow that made a red mushroom blossom in

the center of the waterside village. The drums attained a maddening pitch. The fire was a livid stain on the black curtain. Suddenly an unholy, crescendo scream writhed up out of the basso drone, and the skin tingled on the nape of my neck.

"Good God, man, what was that?" I must have looked moist around the gills. Mrs. Rice had shrilled an exclamation, and Haggot was generously patting her hand. He shrugged.

"Not much," he told me. "Those devil niggers are throwing a little evil to scare evil away. Reckon they're burning a villager at the stake." He laughed uneasily. "Happens here every once in a while."

"But, great Scott!" I looked from Haggot to Mrs. Rice, who seemed more interested at his hand on hers. The sweat wanted to start on my forehead, too. "You don't mean to say they're murdering a man down there. Burning him at the stake? I say! Can't you stop it?"

"Not a chance," Haggot growled. "I may be the Almighty to 'em, but I don't fool with their local voodooisms long as they don't concern me! If they want to burn themselves up I won't stop 'em. A dead Zulu is a good Zulu, anyhow. And this powwow is something particular. Last night a big leopard attacked the village and killed an old woman, see? Her family confabs with the witch-doctor, who burns a few charms an' tells 'em the leopard was none other than Mr. So-and-so, who lives three doors away. Reckon the victim is no pal of the witch-doctor. So the old woman's family tells the story around town. The town accuses Mr. So-and-so of bein' a were-leopard, and burns him at the stake. Were-leopards are an old bugaboo in this country."

I gasped. "Were-leopards?"

"Sure. You've heard of were-wolves. These leopards are the same thing, see? The blacks believe a man can change himself into a leopard at night. In animal form he sneaks around and kills off an enemy. It's weird, all right. Every once in a while a leopard knocks off a villager, here, an' th' town takes it out on some poor fool. But forget it. This is Africa." Haggot grinned. "Let's have a drink around and turn in."

He patted Mrs. Rice on the cheek. He picked up his glass; and she poured, smiling. He yawned, and the light on his gold teeth made a tiny glow in his mouth.

I turned in sweating and chill. Outside the drums throbbed and boomed. My window-blind opened on a rear veranda. I could just distinguish a shadow, stationary in the darkness; just catch a muted hint of breathing. It was Enoch Rice sitting there asleep, back propped against a post, a young leopard nestled on his lap.

THAT I should have been there to see the ghastly climax of the affair was due more to Brander Haggot's planning than to chance.

After my first night there I hated the place. Once a month thereafter I was forced to drive the Asian Witch up that putrid river and spend a night in that ghoulish jungle town.

Never a time I walked past the witch-doctor's *kraal* but I thought of those cannibals howling around a human torch. Twice I noticed evidence of a fresh bonfire in the staked-in clearing. Always the sight of those barbarous villagers, the glow of a flame in darkness, or the echo of a wooden drum got me by the neck-nape.

But that wasn't all. There were

Haggot and the woman and Rice. Haggot with his bluff manner, powerful shoulders, jutting jaw, gold-toothed grin. Rice, a mouse-gray, besotted character with meek eyes and a corner to sit in. His wife—a promising mouth and calculating eyes.

Any fool could have seen what was happening between Haggot and Mrs. Rice. They were making of Rice a buffoon. His days he spent placer mining at a jungle bog. Evenings he spent in a corner with a bottle.

Haggot was supposed to be washing ore somewhere upstream. He sputtered up the river in a motor launch and was gone for several days. But he wasn't placer mining. He had an elephant gun secreted up there, or I missed my guess. And he was shipping tusks back to Durban and calling the cargo "boxes of dirt." Packing cases of dirt they were; but you didn't have to dig far to find the ivory.

As for Mrs. Rice: that part of the affair was absurd. The way she would turn that languorous, red-lipped, brazen-eyed smile at Haggot; the way he, in turn, would pat her cheek, fondle her hand, slap her familiarly. It made me mad! Mad at Rice.

If I had been Rice I'd have kicked the boulder out of my bungalow long ago and dragged my wife around by the hair of her head. Or would I? Was Rice aware of it? Did he see it with his meek, alcohol-beared eyes? Besides, Haggot had the shoulders of an ox and eyes that could go small and red with rage and a ruthless jaw. He was a king to the savage villagers. I remembered his words: "They'd kill the man who touched me."

Or was Rice content with his share of the ivory?

It was none of my business, of course; but it was getting to be a show

I found unpleasant. I felt sorry for Rice, even as I despised him. He looked so lonely and shoved out of the way. My fourth visit up there, I noticed the little man's leopard cub wasn't around; asked him what had become of his pet. He told me it had grown too big; Lyda had wanted it sent away; he had let it go free in the jungle.

"Only friends I got now," he told me plaintively, "are my wife an' Brander. Once we lived in Singapore, mister. I—I had money then. I've sunk all that into this place, now. But that's all right. But it was nice in Singapore. Lyda and I were just married. I," shyly, "was a dentist—"

"You did some work for me," I reminded. "Remember?"

He shook his head. "Had so many customers, you see. I liked the work. I say," he fumbled in his jacket, "look. I've been carryin' this little set ever since. For luck. Look here."

He brought from his pocket a little leather case; snapped it open and proudly displayed a set of gleaming dental instruments. Like an artist exhibiting his brushes. His hands trembled. He had wanted to talk to somebody for a long time; to show those instruments; tell about Singapore.

"But I sold out to come to this place. Everything except these few tools. But it's all right. Lyda wants to stick it out here. Brander promises we'll find gold. Good man, Brander is. I'll stay if my wife wants to. But listen! Last—last week the natives here burned another man. I was in the village when the dance started. It—oh, it was horrible." He clutched my arm, and his face was suddenly moist. "My God, how they tortured him! And the drums! The drums! They *burned* him, finally. He—he was accused of being a were-leopard."

We had been standing alone on the veranda, and at this juncture Haggot and Mrs. Rice strolled arm in arm from the bungalow. Rice retreated to a far corner. Haggot dominated the remainder of the talk.

IT was seven weeks before I sailed the Asian Witch up the river to dock her at the tin wharf, again. I remember the details clearly. Haggot had sent word overland for me to come at once. He was sending a big shipment to Durban if the Asian Witch could carry it right away. My employer shelved a cargo of copra, and I pushed the schooner full speed. In Durban there had been talk. The Portuguese government was going to investigate reports of ivory poaching in their East African territories. I wondered.

The Asian Witch tied in at the tin wharf just at sundown. The village was sweltering after a rain. I noticed Haggot's launch waiting at dockside, apparently standing by for a run up-river. But nobody save black natives stood on the wharf to meet me. The native headman started his boys to work at once; and I watched them stow five wooden packing cases aboard. By that time it was dark and I was clawing at mosquito-bites.

Ordinarily, Haggot had made a point of overseeing his cargo stowage. What was detaining him? I dismissed my Swahili boy—he had won friends in the village and wanted to call on the coal-black, sin-ugly headman's daughter—and I tramped across town alone, plodding up the path for the bungalow.

I don't know why, but the dark-hung path through the trees made my palms prickly that night. Water dripped from the whispering foliage. Muck sloshed underfoot. The lamps

in the bungalow made pale spots of yellow floating through sweaty gloom.

The lighted veranda was deserted. Without overture, I pushed through the matting door into the living room. And was stopped dead in my tracks! I almost bumped into them. Haggot and Mrs. Rice. They stood together, fast in each other's arms, embracing—the sort of kiss one sees in an exaggerated movie fade-out. For the second they did not even notice my entry. And I stood like a wooden dummy, mouth open, I wager. Frankly, I was shocked. Good Lord, what if Rice should see this!

And Enoch Rice *was* seeing it! When I saw him there, sitting mute in the shadows at the other end of the room, I almost let fly an oath of astonishment. The lamp-glow just touched his face, finding it a pallid oval, expressionless, damp. His eyes I could not see. But his white mouth was smiling a faint smile; and his hands were dead white butterflies in his lap.

His gaze wandered to me, and he spoke. He spoke in a mild mechanical voice. "They're going away, you see. They're going away."

Haggot spun around, facing me. "Oh, it's you. Yes, Mrs. Rice and I are going away together, friend. She doesn't love Rice any more, and she's going back with me. We're going back with you on your schooner. You can take us to Durban."

He grinned. "Surprised, are yuh? So was Rice, I reckon. We just now told him about it. Lyda and me have loved each other for a long time, see? So we just told Rice we're going away together. Guess it doesn't bother him much."

An unsteady, acquiescent laugh came from Rice's weak smile. "I guess

it wouldn't matter much if it did bother me, Brander."

And Haggot snapped: "You're right, partner. Lyda and me know what we want, don't we, Lyda?" He chucked her under the chin; turned to me. "You got those boxes of dirt stowed aboard your schooner? Good. I gotta run up th' river to-night, see? Finish some business up there. I'll be back to-morrow sundown. You be ready to sail pronto. Lyda and I want to clear out. I'm leavin' Rice have my mine claims an' all that—"

"But," protested the man in the corner, mildly, "what you bother about shippin' boxes of ore for, Brander, if you're quittin' the game? If you and—and Lyda are going back to civilization, then why—"

I had been stunned. Now I saw the whole thing, and anger burned my cheek. "You're bein' cheated, you fool!" I yelped, taking a step toward Rice. "This man isn't shippin' dirt to be analyzed in Durban. Why, you sniveling idiot! He's been sending ivory—"

The woman screamed. Haggot shot out a hand, and his iron fingers bit like teeth into my wrist.

"Stop!" he bawled. Veins bulged on his brow, and his face was a scarlet mask of fury. "You mind your own business, damn you! I'm runnin' this show. Those are boxes of *dirt*! When I say dirt, I mean it. Now I'm hirin' that schooner, an' you are hired to run it, see? With your mouth shut. When I get back to-morrow night, this woman an' me are goin' aboard an' you'll take us to the coast. You mind your own damn job, or I'll break open your face for you! By—"

Rice was on his feet, and his quiet voice demanded attention. "Never mind, young man," he advised. His tone was genial. A wistful smile

crossed his lips as he gestured resignation. "I'm satisfied. Lyda, I saw you kiss him. You say you love him. All right. If you want to go away with him when he comes back to-morrow evening, go. Go, my dear. And good luck!"

He was like a wraith as he slipped through the matting door. The foot-steps carrying him away made no sound. The door swished shut behind him.

I SPENT the night aboard the Asian Witch. A night of pessimisms and mosquitoes. Somewhere around twelve o'clock I heard Haggot shouting commands and tramping on the tin dock. His motor launch sputtered. A backwash of water slapped under my schooner's stern. The cough of the launch engine died away; and I knew he had turned the bend in the river.

Veiled in mosquito nets, I poked out of my stove-hot cabin, and arranged to sleep on deck. I went to sleep wishing I had flung a fist at Haggot's mouth three hours before, for all that it had been none of my business. I woke up vaguely distraught; gained my feet in a world of dawn-mist, ghost-gray five minutes before sunrise.

Something was going on in the native village. I could hear the yelling that had waked me, and made out black bodies darting through the mists wandering the waterside. A smear of rose grew in the sky eastward as I stood on the schooner's bow, and the mists began to loosen like windblown smoke. Certainly the village was in an uproar. The lanes between the huts were crowded with jabbering groups of men. Excitement was in the air. The very feel of it made me uneasy.

My Swahili came loping down the

wharf, and from him I pried the news. A leopard had attacked the village in the darkness before dawn, killed an infant, and fled back into the jungle. The natives were preparing to beat the brush and capture the beast. The infant's mother was already palavering with the witch-doctor.

Some one would be accused that was certain. Some one would surely burn at the stake for this fresh outrage. The gods would be consulted. The gods would tell. And would I, the white master of the white ship, like to go ashore and join the leopard hunt?

I decided in favor of a cup of coffee and my cabin. Day broke in a sultry heat. The morning was tortured by a steady wailing and thrashing and furor unleashed in the bereaved village. Shortly after I had finished my breakfast a black boy boarded the schooner with a note from Mrs. Rice. She had written to ask me if I would aid her in getting her luggage down to the boat! I marveled at the woman's brass. My first impulse was to tell her to go hellward on a holiday. Then curiosity got the better of me and I trotted up to the bungalow.

I had hoped to see Rice but he wasn't there. His wife blithely informed me she had not seen him since his departure the previous evening. He had, she supposed, spent the night on the rear veranda, and gone out to his placer mine. Now would I help her get this silly load of luggage down to the schooner?

By Heaven, I've seen some brazen females in my life, but I've never seen one as soulless as that Lyda Rice. Here she was coolly walking out on her husband, running off with another man, and preparing herself for the journey with as little concern or conscience as a Parisian actress starting for Lido

Beach. Lord! She hummed as she darted about the bungalow. She fussed with her golden hair, arched her eyes at me, and finally got me by the lapels of my coat.

"You don't like me, do you, mister sailor?" Her lips pouted up at me. She was coy. "You ought to be glad Brander and I are going back on your old boat. We've been good company for you, haven't we? Oh, you think I'm bad, don't you? You wouldn't understand. You're just a boy."

If I had a finger of Scotch in me I'd have kicked her shins for that.

"I think you're playin' that husband of yours a lousy trick," I snarled at her. "You and your big boy, Haggot. Takin' advantage of a sap. Got him to sell out his dentist business and come out here and foot the bills, thinkin' it was a treasure hunt. Then Haggot cleans up poaching ivory, and when he's got a fortune laid by the two of you make a get-away, and leave the little guy stranded in this hell-hole!"

I was so mad I cleared right out of the bungalow, driving her luggage-laden house boy before me.

"I'll see you on your boat when Brander comes back at sunset," she sang out after me; and I could hear her cheerfully whistling as I turned down the path to the village. By George, I swore to myself, if Rice had lifted a finger of protest to stop this lousy affair I'd have given him an aiding fist.

BUT I forgot Mrs. Rice when I reached the village. Under the blazing noon sun the town was seething with the uproar of shouting men. I gathered that the latest leopard-killing had goaded local sentiment to a fever pitch. I could see a mob of natives milling around their witch-doctor's *kraal*, howling like hyenas.

Remembering the local superstition, chills trickled down my spine. It wouldn't be long before the obliging witch-doctor would satisfy that cry for vengeance and blood by denouncing some wretched villager as the were-leopard, and nightfall would bring the atrocious sacrifice. I didn't tarry among those grass huts. I got aboard the Asian Witch, dumped Mrs. Rice's luggage on the fore deck, and shut myself in my cabin, feeling ill.

A touch of fever was in me, and I must have slept like dreamless death, for my Swahili boy was at my bunk shaking me before I realized the passage of time.

"Master, come quick to the village!" The lad's eyes were rolling, and he chattered in great excitement. "Come see, master. They have caught the leopard that killed the child early this morning. They have just trapped the leopard. Come see!"

Without ceremony I kicked him out of the cabin. If there was one thing I didn't want to see it was that African mob howling around a leopard trap. I went out on deck, though, and was surprised to find the afternoon waning.

Already the sun was low, enameling red the surface of the river and obliterating with kindly shadow the foul alleys of the town. The lanes at waterside were deserted. From the direction of the witch-doctor's *kraal* drifted a hullabaloo that could only be raised by jungle men one generation ahead of apes. The infernal noise brought me fully awake. The whole town must have been called together in a crowd and told to scream.

I tell you that fiendish racket was awful to hear with the twilight coming on, mysterious, swift, weighted with jungle-stench and late-day heat. I stood listening on the deck of the

Asian Witch, and my palms itched and prickled.

Suddenly a drum began to throb.

Room-rooma-room! The somber beat of a *dingwinti*. Another drum took up the challenge. Then another. Then tom-toms.

Room-booma-boom! The sound of fists on kettles. The sound of shin-bones beating taut-drawn skin. In a moment the fetid air was quivering. In another moment it was dusk.

The villagers were starting the devil-dance. I smelled smoke before I caught sight of fire-glow. Above the peaked roofs of the huts I could just glimpse tongue-tips of red fire licking at the sky above the witch-doctor's fenced compound.

Night fell about the village with tropic abruptness. The waterside village was a dark smudge save where the fire-glow picked out a few rooftops. The flame-tips blossomed bright. Red and black.

Now the drums were going like mad. *Room-room-room!* Beating time to an unearthly, tuneless, ceaseless rant from the natives. The most appalling chorus out of hell. Dante never conceived an Inferno like it.

Heaven knows how I managed to catch the *put-put-put* of a motor launch distant but approaching. It was Haggot, returning from his journey upriver. I recalled that he was due to be back at sundown.

I was on the point of going forward to put a light on my schooner's bow when a shadow sprang up the gangway and my Swahili was a dancing wraith at my elbow.

"The leopard, master! Come see it quick! Quick! They know him, master. It is one of the white men, master! Big medicine! *Juju!* It is he! He!"

His voice broke into staccato, unintelligible jargon. But he had said enough to turn the heart cold in my chest and send me leaping after him to the wharf. The "leopard" was one of the white men! How had those superstitious black fiends come to this conclusion? My mind was leaden with horror. I couldn't think. I could only propel my feet.

How we ran! Those dark-hung lanes were alleys in the bottom of a pit, treacherous snares. But the boy knew his way; and I kept on his heels. Lord knows what I imagined I could do. But I wanted to see that were-leopard; and I ran. We skirted the center of the village, and brought up panting at the edge of the jungle.

"It is here, master," panted the Swahili. "They found it tied in those bushes an hour past. It was tied to a stake."

THEN we were in the midst of a struggling press of naked bodies.

A red flare came looping through the dark, and a giant Negro with a torch pushed his way to the fore. Believe me, I was ill as sin in the middle of that African crowd; but they never noticed me. They were gazing in awe at a huddled, black corpse spraddled in the mud under the brushwood. The dead native's face leaked crimson, fluent streams. In his fist he clutched a severed strand of rope.

A severed rope, you understand. I saw that the rope had been cut by human hand; but those wild villagers didn't see it. They were shrieking and pointing like maniacs.

"The dead one is the headman's son," my Swahili managed to yell in my ear. "He was left at this spot guarding the leopard, alone. He has just been found dead. The beast has

broken its bonds, killed its guard and vanished. The villagers say it is *juju*, master. The leopard was a man. It will return in human form, master. It was the white man!"

Several of the natives dashed away in the darkness. The remaining few stood screaming.

"How do they know?" I bawled. "How do they tell who this leopard was? It is a lie! Tell them! There is no way for a man to become leopard. Tell them, fool."

"They knew the leopard truly," the Swahili screamed. "I, too! I saw the beast, master. With my own eyes I saw it. It was the white man. I knew which man it was, master. *The leopard had the white man's mouth!*"

A sudden, terrible storm of screaming broke loose, right then, in the village. The giant with the torch bounded past me, and the other natives who had found the guard's corpse went after him. Back through the village ran the knot of blacks. Sweating in terror, I sprinted after them.

I don't know yet where Mrs. Rice came from. I saw a white ghost clinging to a mud wall; then she was grabbing at my sleeve, running in step with me through that evil *cul-de-sac*, screeching in hysterical fright. She must have been on her way down to the schooner. I didn't ask. I ran like the devil, not caring whether she kept step or not; but she did not fall behind.

Racing like an antelope, the black ruffian with the torch led the chase straight through the village to the edge of the river; straight to join a howling, screaming, maniac mob that was storming across the old tin wharf.

Skinny black arms reached skyward, waving firebrands. Shiny black heads made a tossing sea of grotesque knobs dotted by baleful, bulbous white eyes.

The old dock groaned under stamping feet. The din was deafening, paralyzing.

I caught at Mrs. Rice, dragged her to my side into the shadow of a bamboo wall, and crouched, panting, to watch. I remember the ebony devils leaping like acrobats, mouths squalling and afoam, on the outer fringe of the black press. I remember a sight of the witch-doctor, a gibbous, paint-daubed little demon stirring the riot to frenzy by his soprano screams. I remember the way the mob stampeded up the mud bank from the river, formed in a roaring line and started a triumphant march back to the dancing ground where the stake, the fire and drums were waiting.

I shall not soon forget the sight of that marching, howling parade of depraved savages as it swept by on its way. I shall never forget my view of the victim. The torches wavered high; and I saw him very well. He was carried in the sweat-wet arms of the giant headman, and a ghastly burden he was. Except for one thing I never could have recognized him, because that mob that had caught him landing on the mud bank not two minutes before had literally torn him to pieces. But his mangled, dead face hung toward me; and I saw in his yawning mouth the glitter of gold. Haggot!

Mrs. Rice flopped unconscious into the mud; and I stooped to drag her safe from those tramping, stamping, black bare feet.

It was then I glimpsed the other face. Peering from a clump of bushes across the way, just touched by the glow from a passing flare. The eyes in that face shone like diamonds. The grinning mouth made of it a jubilant mask. The mouth seemed to laugh

out once. Then the leaves of the bush rustled softly together, and the face of Enoch Rice, the dentist, disappeared.

I TOOK Mrs. Rice back to the coast, and she looked old. And that's about all there is to the story, save for the incident some weeks later at Dar-es-Salaam. On the veranda of the hotel, there, I overheard a strange conversation. An Australian diamond merchant was talking to a group of British officers, and his whisky-loudened voice reached me at the other end of the veranda.

"On the boat up from Durban, he was," the Australian was saying. "I tell you, it was some show. The leopard this chap had was a mighty bad-lookin' animal, too. Isn't often you can tame those devils, but this one was meek as two mice. The fellow was taking him back to England, he said, an' going to show him in circuses, fairs and the like. He'll make a fortune out of it, too, or I miss my guess. Why, he had that leopard out on deck, an' handled him like you'd pet a lamb, and the beast would purr like a green-grocer's tomcat.

"Funny, the fellow was such a mild sort of bird, too. Retirin' sort of guy. But the leopard was his pal. Why, he'd stick his fist in that leopard's mouth, and tweak its tail. Give you the chills to see! But here's the amazing thing! Here's the thing that popped the eyes outa my head! Listen! In that bloody leopard's upper jaw—right smack in front where you couldn't help but see them—there were four gold teeth!"

The British officers were inclined to disbelieve the Australian diamond merchant's story.

I believed it!

THE END.



*His kick sent that obscene Brahmin into
a rather graceful somersault*

The Affair at Kaligaon

Bound for the "holy" city of India's most vice-ridden fanatics are Brazenose Blake, the British Resident, and the girl he dares not meet—while Ben Quorn lumbers along on Fate disguised as an elephant

By TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "By Allah Who Made Tigers," "Asoka's Alibi," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

IN her efforts to combat some of the more vicious customs of her Indian border state of Narada, the young Ranee had the support of Brazenose Blake, the British Resident, who was the sole link between the independent state and India. She could count even more absolutely on Ben Quorn, Philadelphia taxi driver, whom fate had thrown in her path; and he had developed an uncanny faculty for managing elephants, being able to control

even the mighty Asoka, king of the Ranee's herd, at times.

But when she defied the Brahmin high priest by inviting an American girl, Virginia Blackstone, to visit her, and help her understand Western ways, the trouble began. Ben Quorn guided Asoka—with the Ranee and Miss Blackstone in the *howdah*—through ambush on the way to Narada; but at last he decided it was too perilous, and turned off toward Kaligaon.

This story began in the *Argosy* for May 24.

Meantime Brazenose Blake, accompanied by the wily intriguer, Bamjee, university-educated *babu*, and the Ranee's purchasing agent, rode to rescue the Ranee from the Brahmins. But all the way Blake was in mortal fear that he would meet her; for he had loved Virginia Blackstone, had quixotically quarreled with her, and was now afraid that his duty would compel him to meet her, giving him the appearance of trying to force his unwelcome attentions on her.

So when he spied Asoka coming toward Narada with the Ranee and Miss Blackstone in the *howdah*, he was an easy prey to Bamjee's pleas that he head toward Kaligaon. Bamjee had business in that sink of iniquity but dared not go there without powerful protection, and he knew Blake had orders from the Indian government to investigate the scandals of that "holy" city. So they started for there shortly before Asoka turned away from Narada and toward Kaligaon.

CHAPTER XI.

"LOOK AT THAT TEMPLE WALL!"

KALIGAON stinks, not only to the nose but metaphysically, too.

It is a cesspool of superstitions that were rated rotten in the days when *suttee*, the immolation of widows, was considered civilized. The Biblical abominations of Astarte were no worse than Kaligaon's of to-day, since nothing worse can be imagined by the human mind.

Kaligaon has no glamour; it is merely vile, and knells the death of every decent thought—the doom of aspiration—the decline and fall of man from spiritual curiosity to brutish self-abasement in a dull, unlovely tyranny of

sexual desire enthroned as the disgusting god of nature.

It is a place that could not possibly exist to-day except in India, and not in India unless the vested interests of jealous castes were so intrenched in the mind of priestly privilege that even a modern government must shrink from the task of digging out the roots.

It is a place whose fame among the ignorant has drawn to it by the hundred thousand, once in every three years during unnumbered centuries, pilgrims from the ends of India, for the most part tramping all the dusty miles on foot, in abject poverty, denying themselves even enough food in order to have money to give to the priests. There is hardly a mile but has its scores of little heaps of stones to mark where some one had died and reckoned life a failure because he could not reach the shrine at Kaligaon, where obscene symbols stand in lamp-lit gloom within a golden crypt.

It was the last place in the world for a man like Brazenose Blake to view with indifference. He loathed it. He was neither Puritan nor rake, neither prig nor hedonist, but a practical-minded sportsman perfectly aware that one man's meat may be another's poison, and that moral codes are geographical without an absolute relation to vice and virtue.

He could see the virtue in the pilgrims' longing to reach Kaligaon, since they had been told it was a place of sacred mysteries; but, like any other man of decent mind, he could see nothing but bottomless vice in the place itself and in the men who made their living by parading vice as virtue.

As he approached the gate of Kaligaon he began to feel nauseated because the smell was something that

even an Indian official's nostrils, long used to Gargantuan stinks, could only endure by exercise of sheer will. Even Bamjee showed qualms, and Bamjee was no specialist in civic niceties; true, he had helped to clean Narada City, but that was because the Ranee ordered it, and Bamjee made a handsome profit purchasing supplies.

Even the horses snorted at the filth and at the burning *ghat*, between road and river, where the dying lay beside the dead to await their turn while mangy vultures watched them from the trees with gorged indifference.

There was a soul-chilling gray gloom in the atmosphere; perhaps it was dust, and if so the dust was dirty and impenetrable even by the Indian sun, whose magic could only change it into a misty hopelessness, through which the lepers and the cancerous sacred cattle groped like demons in a madman's dream.

IT is against the law of Kaligaon to destroy life, but there is no obligation, expressed or implied, to preserve it; so sick beasts are left to starve along with human lepers in the streets, the animals having a shade the best of it because the humans are expelled from the city at sundown.

The beasts may stay within the gates—the grim, disgusting gates of Kaligaon, whereon all imaginable vice is carved in life-size illustration, rich in detail, and above whose triple arches stand the statues of the Kaligaon trinity, necklaced with human skulls and crimsoned with the paint that nowadays the priests must use in place of the actual blood that the paint represents.

The city walls are very high and ancient; time has undone most of the indecency that once was pictured on

them, though there are piecemeal carvings left by carelessness of the fanatical Moslem conquerors with scimitar and chisel who defaced them and slit the throats of the scornful hierarchs who view such standards of obscenity with pride.

Around the walls outside the city lies an unmapped maze of dwellings, *godowns*, brothels, workshops, stables, refuse heaps—all of which drain into the river, whence the drinking water comes and where the dying lave their feet until the cholera, or what else, kills them, and their half-burned ashes are spread on the sacred stream to be raced for by vultures and sacred fish. There was a dam below Kaligaon, which made a festering pool of the river, and though it is beautiful by moonlight the light of day reveals it as a sewer.

These sights Blake saw with his handkerchief held to his nose as he approached and rode through Kaligaon Gate, aware that he was being scowled at even by the leprous beggars who swarmed toward him, risking his horse's heels as they tore off rags to show their deformities.

An unimaginative, rather simple man in his well-bred way, Blake was stirred to a sort of prophetic anger.

"Bamjee," he said, for Bamjee rode knee to knee beside him, too afraid to adopt the single file that courtesy demanded, "I believe I understand why massacres so often followed conquest. If I should lead a victorious army into this place, I believe I would emulate Genghis Khan and would order my men to wipe it off the earth."

"*Sahib*, this is unwise—very. Am respectfully obedient *babu*, but—"

"But what?"

"Also am experienced in certain matters—as for instance, how many beans make five, if you will pardon me.

Can sit serenely, *sahib*, when cinema bad-men shoot directly from the screen toward the audience. But this—"

"Nonsense. Who would dare to shoot us?"

"Let me see," said Bamjee. "There was Charley First. He was a king, I think—decapitated. There were Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley—Presidents—important, very. And, unless the world was dreaming, there was Sarajevo and an Austrian archduke. Somebody always dares to pull the trigger, *sahib*. Nobody ever counts the consequences."

"**W**HAT do you suggest?"

"That we turn back and visit my cousin outside the city. That we engage his services as diplomatic mediator, so to speak. That we should send him to the ecclesiastical panjandrum, with your honor's compliments and even a little present along with them. A check is negotiable, even in Kaligaon. Money talks all languages; it justifies one's dealings with the devil—or with the English, which the priests say is the same thing. I suggest that we should blackmail, browbeat and persuade my cousin—all three courses may be necessary to intrigue for the priestly permission for us to inspect the city and whichever temple they believe is least likely to drive us crazy."

"Their permission be damned. Turn around, if you're afraid, and go and find your cousin. I'm going ahead. I will bribe nobody."

"There is a difference, *sahib*, between bribing and paying blackmail. It is the latter course that I recommend."

"I never paid a shilling's worth of blackmail in my life. I never will."

"Let us pray God to pity the

proud!" said Bamjee. "Meekness may cost money; nevertheless, it is not a bad investment now and then."

Bamjee was afraid to turn back. He was also afraid to lose Blake's good will by deserting him. And to his credit, he was afraid to let Blake ride alone. Bamjee did not flatter himself that he was any paragon of valor or much of a lance to lean on, but he knew that two heads and two horses are no worse than one when a riot begins. So he edged a bit closer to Blake and kept pace with him, trying to look bold and unconcerned.

"Dammit, Bamjee, I have seen some copies of the secret books and most of the worst sights of India, but nothing to compare with this. I didn't think it possible. Look at that temple wall! Colored, too—all newly painted—they can't blame that on the ancients; it looks as if it was painted yesterday."

"*Sahib*, it is painted once a month. There is a fund, contributed by pilgrims, for the purpose."

"Good Lord—do you see the vultures tearing at that bull before it's dead?"

"*Sahib*, nobody may interfere because it is wrong to take life, and to protect the dying bull it would be necessary to injure and perhaps kill the living vultures."

"What is the danger to us, then? If they mayn't kill, what makes you afraid?"

"*Sahib*, logic warns me that they are going to try to kill us, just as lack of logic will suggest to them that we, being outside the pale of their religion, are less than animals. We are dead already; thus we may be slain without sin. Besides, they might encourage us to die without exactly 'bumping us off,' as Mr. Quorn would call it. They

can put us in a dungeon, can't they? They are not obliged to feed us or even to give us water. There are several ways of making life a little difficult to live. Have you a weapon, *sahib*?"

"No, I never carry weapons. . . . Who are those women?"

"**W**IDOWS, *sahib*. *Suttee* having been abolished and being too risky to be practised except in secret, the priests have invented the plan of marrying the widows to an image in one of the temples. They explain that the widows are legally dead, because their husbands died, and if it were not for the lawless interference of the British Government the widows would have to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres. Therefore, being dead, they are the property of beings in the next world, who are of a sort of universal nature. Consequently, the widows are to be regarded as universal property. And when they die they are so doubly dead that the priests say they cease to exist. Can anybody prove the contrary?"

"Does the Ranee of Narada know about it?"

"What can she do? Narada City was never as bad as this place, but it has taken all her courage, as your honor knows, to improve conditions in Narada; and even now the priests defy her. So how can she attempt to tackle Kaligaon? It is—"

"It's an Augean stable," said Blake.

"Was there ever a female Hercules?" asked Bamjee.

"Not that I know of. What's that building with the wooden sides and big stone columns at the corners—that big building, at the end of this street?"

"That is the holy of holies, *sahib*. That is the sacred place so many pilgrims die before they reach. There—"

But something interrupted him, he never knew what. It was something hard that some one threw. It hit Bamjee on the head behind the right ear, so that he fell to the left across Blake's horse's shoulders and Blake caught him by the waist. Bamjee's horse bolted. Blake, with Bamjee hanging like a sack across his knees, rode full pelt in pursuit.

He cornered the runaway horse between a crowd of city ruffians and a baked clay shrine that was so obscene that he laughed in rejoicing when the horse crashed into it and knocked it over.

Now it is dangerous to laugh in Kaligaon. To be an unblest, unenlightened foreigner is bad enough; but to be that and to laugh about it is to stir the very lees of Kaligaon's anger. Hampered by having to manage two horses and hold Bamjee, Blake was instantly surrounded by a yelling mob, which armed itself with prehistoric weapons—primitive, but ten times more efficient than revolvers in the hands of men who can't shoot. It began to rain stones. The air rattled with sticks.

Blake's trade was diplomacy. He was an old school diplomat, who believed in offering the other cheek before he smote his adversary—not that that made any difference. It seems to be the oldest rule of all that diplomats lose their heads more thoroughly than any one whenever the absurd rules of their game are upset by simple directness.

He proceeded to address the mob, in its own language, much too accurately as to grammar and pronounced with the aristocratic English accent that in the ears of annoyed opponents is like a spark to gasoline. Quite a number of acute if unimportant wars

have had their origin in that accent, which is meant to be so mollifying but exasperates worse than a fist on the nose.

"Now be advised by me and don't make asses of yourselves. You won't gain anything by using force. You'll only bring down unpleasant consequences on yourselves."

TOO true. Truth, however, is as irritating as a flick of the whip to people who have been fed so long on lies that lies are palatable. Blake was caused to cease from speaking by a dead dog thrown straight at his mouth. Whereat, like any other diplomat, old or new school, he completely lost his diplomatic standing and became a human being, governed by human motives. So the dog wrought better service dead than living, Blake being no mean strategist and no man's fool when he had done with what the governments call conciliation.

He rammed in his spurs and rode like a polo player racing for a goal ten seconds before the call of time. He scattered the mob to right and left. Aware that instinct would warn them to block his retreat, he charged straight forward.

Knowing that the heart of things is where solutions lie, and that a dagger in the heart can kill not only men but causes; seeing a new mob come surging hundreds strong up by-streets to attack him, and aware that tactics twice repeated lose the virtue of surprise, he swerved and sprang the ace of all surprises on them. He rode full pelt up the steps of the temple that Bamjee had assured him was the holy of all Kali-gaon holies. At the top of the steps, amid a maze of carved indecencies, the heavy wooden doors stood open. In he rode, into incense-heavy gloom, where

guttering *ghce*-fed lanterns made a thousand pricks of yellow light.

There was a stone floor, ringing hollow as the horses skidded to the rein. There were niches, sensed rather than seen, in which the jewelled eyes of lewd gods and unchaste goddesses leered on obscenity done in the name of Kali and Siva. Priests and worshippers, like rats caught stealing, scurried into darkness, swallowed by shadows that stank.

A gong rang. A man with a long beard, lean and naked, opened a brass door that glittered with light from the chamber behind him. For a moment he stood staring, one hand on the door, the other on the door post, a patina of sweat and ashes on his skin, so that he looked like a Pompeian satyr done in bronze. A woman as naked as the man stood on tiptoe to peer over his shoulder. Irritated, he elbowed her in the stomach. She cursed him. He turned to strike her—and the next he knew, two horses crashed into the door, which opened inward.

Blake let go the reins and vaulted from the saddle, lifting Bamjee to the ground. Then he kicked the High Priest—he was no less—and the High Priest did a rather graceful somersault that landed him flat on his back on the floor in the outer darkness. The woman followed unassisted; Blake slammed the door shut, bolted it, and turned to examine Bamjee, who was only stunned, not badly hurt.

There was an altar, or something like it, in the midst. Around it was a trough containing water that had probably been blessed with all sorts of mysterious ritual. Blake blessed it anew; it was just what he wanted. He took from the altar a golden bowl inset with jewels and embossed with an orgy of gods and humans, dipped up water with it, and soused it onto Bamjee's

face until the *babu*, spluttering, recovered consciousness and sat up.

"Oh my God!" said Bamjee.

"Pick a better god than this one," Blake advised him. He tied the horses to an indecent symbol that projected from the wall—there was no other kind—and grimly began to study his surroundings. The famous "golden" walls of this inmost shrine of Kaligaon's mysteries were actually brass, and indifferent brass at that, but they shone like gold because there were dozens of lamps, hung high and backed by mirrors of many facets that projected the light through varicolored glass.

But the account Blake had heard of the figures embossed on the walls in half-relief was not exaggerated; no man could exaggerate it; no man could invent anything viler.

BAMJEE was tittering with enjoyment of Blake's scandalized modesty.

"After all, these things are sacred. That is the important point," said he. "By being here we are committing sacrilege."

"Don't be a damned fool."

"*Sahib*, the foolishness was in riding into this place. Oh, well—even torture must come to an end, although they will make it last as long as possible. But better, I suppose, to die distinguished than like a pair of doubting Hamlets. We are the first outsiders ever to enter this place. That is one world's record—pity it won't be published. Do you realize that nearly all of Kaligaon must be in conference to decide what to do? We may live for a day and a night if they torture us skillfully. I would give all of it for a chance to listen to that conference. It must be funny. *Sahib*, why am I afraid,

and you not? Why are you solemn, and I not?"

"Solemn? I'll burn this temple down before I'll let them torture us," said Blake. He pulled an automatic lighter from his pocket, tested it, extinguished it and looked around for inflammable tinder, but there was none; the brass walls and the stone floor hardly lent themselves to arson.

"Dammit, Bamjee," he said suddenly, "I'm afraid I'll have to beg your pardon. It's my fault that we're in this mess. Maybe I can get you out of it. I'll try to bargain with them. I will undertake to stay here pending investigation, provided they will let you go. I will threaten to break this holy of holies of theirs into unrecognizable pieces if they don't agree."

"*Sahib*, they will not agree. Why should they? And besides—"

"Well? What?" Blake asked him gruffly.

"It is the first time, *sahib*, that a gentleman of your race ever offered to stay and die, in order that this *babu* might go and live."

"Come, now, don't get sentimental, Bamjee."

"Dammit!" Bamjee rose to the occasion. He could not stand yet, but he could throw his head back and square his shoulders. "I am no more sentimental than you are, you damned Englishman! I can die as cockily as you, damn your eyes! You are a brave man—and you propose to treat me like a timid woman. You are a sentimental gentleman, and you propose to treat me like a cad who has no feelings. You propose to rob me of the privilege of staying with you in appreciation of—"

Bamjee's voice broke.

"Shut up. Shake hands. No offense meant. Sorry."

"I apologize," said Bamjee.

"Not at all." Horror of sentimental conversation between man and man, which is a British failing, forced Blake, who was a sentimentalist if nothing else, to tell his inmost thoughts to Bamjee. It was the simplest, the only direct means of avoiding any further blather about mutual regard; and it would serve the little man as proof that he was now accepted as a man who understood what cricket means.

"Dammit, Bamjee, a worse mess isn't possible."

"We will find a way out of it, *sahib*. God is good to men like me who have no compunctions but also not much malice. I am lucky. I will share my luck with you."

"Good of you. But the worst of it is that if we do get out of here there'll be a hell of a scandal just when I would rather eat my hat than have one."

"Pardon me, but how English!" Bamjee remarked. "*Sahib*, I have never known an Occidental who could tell the whole truth in a crisis of life and death. You are all what Shakespeare called you—actors, all of you. And you can only play one part, which is that of self-deception. I know we shall both be taken prisoners and put to torture within ten or fifteen minutes, so I don't deceive myself or you. On the other hand, you don't even mention what worries you."

BLAKE walked over to where the horses stood champing their bits.

Because there was nothing else that he could think of to do at the moment, he lifted their feet to examine the shoes, speculating as to whether they could gallop on the smooth stone temple floor.

"What do you imagine it is that worries me?" he demanded.

"Miss Blackstone."

"Whatever hit you just now must have injured your brain," said Blake.

"Perhaps, *sahib*. But I think you would rather die than let Miss Blackstone find you scandalously caught investigating this abominable place. You think she will believe your secret character entices you to study such things. You feel like a man in tennis flannels who has stepped into a sewer. You would rather she should see you coming out of church or some such place."

"Dammit, what makes you suppose Miss Blackstone means anything to me?" Suddenly he remembered the letter home that he had found at midnight on his desk. "Have you been reading any of my correspondence?" he demanded. "A letter to my mother?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then all I can say is, damn your impudence."

"I bow. If my head did not ache so badly I would bow more humbly. Nevertheless—"

"What?"

"Had I not read the letter I should have been ignorant, and that would have prevented me from offering to be of service in the matter."

"How so?"

"They will presently torture us, so it might be well to make our testaments and hide them where they may be found by the investigators who will come to inflict penalties and hush up matters after we are dead. I can write in my testament that you came here to rescue me. Thus Miss Blackstone will think kindly of you; and though I don't believe it makes the slightest difference what people think of us when we are dead, it might make dying easier."

"Don't be an idiot. Oh—I see—

stupid of me—what you want is my forgiveness for reading my correspondence? All right, I forgive you.”

“Dammit! I refuse to be forgiven!” Bamjee swayed to his feet unsteadily, blinked a few times and began to feel stronger. “I insist it was a damned ungentlemanly thing to do—beneath my dignity!”

Blake studied him, at a loss to see the point. Dignity and Bamjee hardly were associated in his mind. Bamjee enlightened him:

“Never mind how I have lived, you have shaken hands with me. I mean to die a gentleman, with all the responsibilities. I acted like a cad when I read your letter. What do you propose to do about it?”

“Oh—ah—why, yes, certainly, a damn’ dishonorable trick. If your head weren’t hurt I’d punch it.”

“I would punch back.”

“However, since your head is rather badly hurt, let’s consider we’ve had the fight, shake hands and call it a closed incident.”

“I confess myself defeated in fair combat. Your fists are far stronger than mine, and you can kick much harder than I can,” said Bamjee. “Therefore I apologize, as one man to another.”

“I accept the apology. Shake hands again. There, not another word about it. Head better? Think you can ride now? Good, I’ll help you up and we’ll see if we can’t escape from here.”

CHAPTER XII.

“IT NEEDS A HERCULES.”

THERE was an excellent reason why Blake and Bamjee were left so long in undisturbed possession of the inner shrine of the temple of

Kaligaon, like a pair of healthy insects in the heart of a rotten fruit.

Asoka had just arrived at Kaligaon Gate, not only with the Ranee of Narada in the *howdah* on his high back, but with a cursed Western woman, too; and on his neck was Ben Quorn—a tobacco-chewing, casteless alien, reputed by fools and fanatics to be a rebirth of the legendary Gunga *sahib*. Kaligaon hated him—hated his name, his looks, his soul and his very shadow. Had not the Gunga *sahib*, at least a thousand years ago, denounced the Kaligaon creed and prophesied that in the gods’ good time he would return to destroy the place along with all its human parasites?

Quorn was doubly detestable. If he truly were the Gunga *sahib* reborn, as his extraordinary eyes and his whole appearance indicated, then he was the enemy of grace and should be banished again to the infernal regions whence he came at far too frequent intervals. He should be so emphatically banished, with such torture and degradation that he would stay dead this time twice or three times as long.

If he were not the veritable Gunga *sahib*, then he was the foulest sort of an impostor, for whom no mistreatment could be bad enough. The fact that Quorn had never claimed to be the Gunga *sahib* made no difference whatever. The fact that he had frequently denied it made no difference. Upward of a million people said he was the Gunga *sahib*; that was the important point. And here he was at Kaligaon.

Quorn did not even know that he was known by sight or name in Kaligaon. He was curious to see the place, and since Virginia Blackstone had refused to leave the Ranee, he was bent on finding a messenger to notify the Ranee’s soldiers where she was.

He hoped to find a second messenger to send to Rana Raj Singh, in the hope that the prince might somehow find his way over the trackless hills; he rated Rana Raj Singh and his penniless Rajput noblemen a lot more highly than he did the Ranee's troops. And meanwhile he proposed to find the makings of a decent meal and a place where two travel-weary women might rest themselves and enjoy some privacy.

However, the abominable carvings on the gate upset Quorn's notions of propriety. It would have shocked him to be present when the Ranee saw them, although he understood that her eastern heritage had familiarized her, almost from birth, with matters that even the loosest cities of the western world keep out of sight. He knew she was a royal rebel against these degrading superstitions, and it scandalized him to have to confront her with such evidence of the hopelessness of the war she waged.

All that was bad enough. But to bring Virginia Blackstone face to face with such revolting indecency was a much greater shock to Ben Quorn than it was to her. For she was sane; she could afford to laugh at it. To her the stinks were hugely more distressing and she rode with her handkerchief over her mouth, which gave Quorn the impression that she was blushing.

The gate had been shut and bolted the moment Asoka hove in sight. Quorn shouted, and while he waited for some one to come and open it he turned to say his piece to Virginia Blackstone. He could not have been prevented had the Ranee ordered silence—not if the obscene divinities themselves had come to life and, pausing from their lewd amusements, had forbidden him to speak.

"Miss, don't you look at it. If I'd ha' knowed it was as bad as this I'd sooner ha' chanced the dangers along the high road. I'd turn back now if it weren't that we'd be benighted. There's things here as 'ud make an elephant feel shamefaced. Hide your head under the blankets, miss."

Then loyalty surged to the front. "And don't get to thinking, miss, that this is any o' your friend the Ranee's doing. Her highness is dead set ag'in' it. She's the fireman's nozzle when it comes to cleaning up—she hasn't got around to this yet, that's all."

"Needs some cleaning," said Virginia from behind her handkerchief. Then, unconsciously using the words that Blake had used less than an hour before, "'It needs a Hercules.' It smells and looks like an Augean stable."

"Hercules?" Quorn asked her. "Wasn't he the guy who invented blasting powder?"

"No. He was the man who turned a river into a particularly filthy stable—on a bet."

"I'll bet with him that he'd lose his stake in this place. Watch out, ladies—somebody's coming to open the gate. Duck under the blankets—please, miss—please, your highness—keep out o' sight until I get a word with 'em. A set o' guys who'd keep them carvings on a gate 'ud do most anything, so hide yourselves and hang on tight in case I turn sudden and scoot for safety."

KALIGAON'S priests, however, did not propose to lose so easily as that such an easy prey as Quorn or such a valuable hostage as the Ranee. They had seen her from the roofs, and they knew that she had no escort. Since the gods had led her

thus into their hands they proposed to make the most of opportunity, and richly she should pay for Blake's and Bamjee's sacrilege before they let her go again.

Since she had had the impudence to flaunt Ben Quorn beneath their noses and to bring with her a Western female, she should be made to witness their subjection to the same treatment about to be accorded to Blake and Bamjee. Furthermore, she should submit to the extreme humiliation of indorsing it and taking all the blame in the likely event that the British would make a fuss about it afterward. But first, she must be trapped; they did not want to kill her on the run, they wanted her alive and at their mercy.

So they double-baited their trap. Suspecting that the elephant was hungry they had heaped about a hundred-weight of good grain on some shutters pulled down from a window belonging to a holy man who had the concession for selling uncooked food to pilgrims and others within the city. And a little higher up the filthy street they had gathered a band of musicians with enough banners and temple servitors to indicate that the Ranee was welcome and was to be accorded a procession through the city.

It was a quick job, rather ably managed, and there was no sign of a mob or of ambush or of intended violence of any kind; a group of priests in full regalia stood just within the gate on either side and a priest who was plainly a man in authority gestured an invitation to come straight on in. He used exactly the correct blend of pride and politeness, and at the same moment some one threw some hot cakes on the shutters beside the heap of grain.

They were entirely right about Asoka, who was used to being fed, as

a public spectacle, in every town he visited. He was hungry and hot cakes were his passion. He accepted the invitation without waiting for orders from Quorn; and the moment Asoka's tail was inside the gate it was closed behind him, although there was still no show of force or of anything whatever that should rightly arouse suspicion.

The musicians struck up an appalling tune with cymbals, drums and brass wind-instruments and Asoka approached the banquet spread for him.

But the dealer in grain had been overlooked, or at any rate not consulted. Probably embittered by the extortion of temple treasurers, who taxed his cent per cent profits down to a mere pittance, he strode down-street and saw his good grain spread on the shutters stolen from his own front windows and about to be devoured by an elephant whose owners certainly had paid no money in advance. He ran. He pulled his slipper off. He smote Asoka on the snout.

And by coincidence, at exactly that moment, thirty or forty men emerged from buildings near the gate with obvious intent to form up behind the priests. If they had been unarmed that might have been nothing to worry about, but they all had swords and shields; so Quorn, who was as nervously alert to danger as a mongoose, struck Asoka with the *ankus* pretty smartly to bring him to attention.

Nobody could blame Asoka for supposing that was meant to arouse his anger against the fool who struck him with a slipper heel on the tip of his sensitive trunk; and besides, of all the easy ways of starting trouble, possibly the easiest in the world was to come between Asoka and his dinner.

Having registered his protest, the

dealer in corn had stepped back; so, to reach him Asoka set a forefoot on the shutter. That tipped a corner of the shutter down into a mudhole in the filthy street, which spilled the corn and cakes and caused the shutter to rise and smite Asoka's legs. *Ankus* notwithstanding, instantly Asoka caught the offending culprit by the waist and hurled him through his open window, where he lay yelling.

Asoka was red-eyed now. He had forgotten dinner. He was out for bloody vengeance, further maddened by the men with swords and shields who shouted and ran to prevent him from smashing the side of the house in his effort to follow his victim and finish the job. A sudden rush from behind him, accompanied by shouting, is the one sure way of making an elephant bolt.

"HANG on, leddies!"

Quorn knew better than to make things worse by using the *ankus* now. His job was to sit tight and watch for a chance to get control again when the first burst of Asoka's fury should have spent itself. Asoka went screaming up-street like a five-ton cannon ball, so neatly through the midst of the musicians that they separated as a puddle splashes, half to either hand, when a big wheel crashes through it.

Up the street was a crowd that fled and left a booth unguarded—a blue and vermilion booth that sheltered the scandalous effigies of a god and goddess, whose nuptials were celebrated once a year on that exact spot because, so legend had it, it was there that they first taught the human race the impropriety of being chaste.

The sacred bulls, alarmed out of their melancholy by Asoka's onrush,

fled before him straight into the open door of the booth, where they jammed between the heavy poles that formed the door-frame.

"Hang on, leddies! Duck!"

Asoka followed the bulls, but swerved to avoid collision. His forehead crashed into the latticed framework on which the painted cloth covering of the booth was hung. He went through it as if it had not been there. Quorn was caught by the top of the framework and clung to it, but the top of the *howdah* struck him from behind, the frame broke, and he scrambled back into his place behind Asoka's ears, a bit bruised but too scared and excited to know it.

By that time the sacred bulls had struggled through the opening and were milling around inside the booth with their tails in the air, upsetting scores of godlets that had been set on a shelf on three sides of the tent. After galloping two or three times around the booth they escaped through the door, but they had made their contribution to the chaos. Asoka stepped on a gilded godlet. Being made of bronze, it rolled away beneath his foot, thus causing him to bump his shoulder hard against the platform in the midst of which the god and goddess were enshrined beneath a canopy.

So he smashed the god and goddess. They were made of clay and ivory and brass and many other substances, and they wore enough fake jewelry to have graced a waxwork show. The beauty of them was that every piece would come apart when suitably attacked. Asoka shook them, pricked his trunk on something sharp, raised one and used it as a battering-ram to break the other, smashing both of them to smithereens.

After that the booth went down; he

never could be satisfied to do a half job of destruction. As he pulled the framework down and trampled it he hurled the little godlets right and left into the mud of the street and against the walls of near-by houses, almost in the way that a digging terrier throws dirt around.

By that time Kaligaon's priesthood had gathered its scattered wits enough to arouse the populace and set them on to the attack like hornets; only, unlike hornets, they were rather hampered by the religious admonition not to take life. They might, and they did, make a demonstration with swords and spears. They did rain rocks and broken tiles from the roofs of houses. But, no matter what the priests said now, nor how noisily the arch-high-priest himself, with gong and ritual of curses, removed the ban on killing, superstition had sunk too deep to be repudiated.

Almost undirected, that excited and indignant mob, as it were by instinct, worked like one organized gang in an attempt to drive Asoka toward the quarry at the rear of the town, two hundred feet deep, where the sweepers dumped the rubbish from a platform that might yield beneath the elephant's enormous weight. If he and his passengers should die by that means, there would be no death guilt on the residents of Kaligaon.

They might have done it, had not Quorn been in his place on Asoka's neck. He could not stop the furious animal, but he could guide him to some extent. He caught sight of the quarry at the end of a long, filthy lane.

"So that's the little game, eh? Hell's bells! End for end, you big bum—sit tight, leddies!"

A swarm of excited laymen under the direction of a dozen priests were barricading a side street to prevent

Asoka from heading in the wrong direction. As he turned he caught sight of the jumble of poles and furniture, doors, shutters, carts and what not else. He charged it instantly—went through it like a landslide—left it shattered in his wake, and swung around two corners until he brought up face to face with the wooden temple that was Kaligaon's pride.

There was a crowd on the steps, and they fled at sight of him. He paused and seemed to ponder for a moment, then mounted the steps and strode into the temple, smashing the top of the *howdah* against the heavy door-beam. And now Quorn grew genuinely worried.

"Miss," he said hurriedly, over his shoulder, to the Ranee, "look out—he's turning ugly! When he heads for the dark it means he wants to sulk. When he sulks, he's murderous. You and the other leddy climb down by his tail if you can manage. Slip in through the first door you can find. This ain't going to be no picnic."

VIRGINIA was the first to jump for it; she caught a lamp that hung by heavy brass chains from a beam and hung there until the Ranee climbed down India-fashion by Asoka's tail and dragged up a four-wheeled gilded box in which temple godlets were paraded through the streets. From the lamp to the box and then from the box to the floor was an easy business, but Virginia only managed it in the nick of time. Asoka turned and smashed the box to smithereens. The women fled. They hammered on a door, but it did not yield.

"This way," said the Ranee, breathless, leading along the wall in gloom fortunately too deep to let them see the nature of the carvings into which

they bumped as they felt their way along. "This way—hurry!"

They found another door. They entered and bolted the door behind them.

The slamming door startled Asoka, but as he turned to investigate the source of the noise he saw about a hundred priests and laymen running up the temple steps, so he charged them instead. They were armed with sticks and knives, but no man waited to discover what stick or knife could do against that elephant.

They fled like smoke, he after them, and one man—fatter than the rest and clothed in bright red—scooted to the right, alone, toward the river that gurgled and sang over rapids at the place where its course had been turned to make two streams, of which one became the almost stagnant pool beside the burning *ghat*. The other was a riotous, rock-staked torrent that circled around the city and became a tributary of Narada River after it had plunged down half a dozen falls.

The man in red ran like a fat, demented ghost. His speed seemed superhuman. Fear so frenzied him that his fat feet hardly touched the earth, and though he ran into the wind it seemed as if the wind was blowing him.

Asoka gave chase up a long street, gaining spurt by spurt, and all but caught him, but the fat man saved himself by inches, diving underneath the props of the wooden wall of the embankment of the river. The props formed a sort of tunnel, being set so close together that there was hardly room to put fingers between them. They were an afterthought—a mere haphazard reinforcement of the wooden wall which supported a levee-like embankment of earth and stones, some five feet thick.

Asoka tried to follow down the tun-

nel, but he could not even wedge his head into the opening. He hurried to the other end to meet the fat man coming out, but the fat man remained where he was, so Asoka paraded the line to and fro, examining each prop to find a place where he could thrust in his trunk or his tusk and break an opening through which to reach his prey—Quorn talking to him all the time:

"Now, buddy, come and cool off. Come and get into the river. You don't want that fat guy. Come on, d'ye hear me?"

He whacked him with the *ankus*, using it fiercely, but Asoka was determined to reach the fat man and to drag him forth and trample him into crimson mud. He found two props that had an inch of space between them, drove his tusk in and worked like a giant beaver.

Quorn stuck to his place. There was nothing else whatever for Quorn to do, except to shout to the man behind the woodwork that shielded Kaligaon from the river:

"Get out o' there, you, and run for it—afore he breaks the whole damn' shootin'-match! You fat fool, he'll drown the city! Where's your patriotism? Come on out and run for it."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AUGÉAN STABLE.

IT was pitch-dark, but both women had lighters. They found themselves in a passage at the head of stairs descending to a smelly underworld. The wooden walls were painted with life-size obscenities. At the head of the stairs was a statue worse than any they had seen yet; there were three lamps in front of it, fed with rancid *ghee*; the Ranee lighted one.

"I would prefer the darkness," she said, "but it can't be helped. At any rate, now you know the worst about us. This is the element of India that I will slay, or it shall slay me. Let us look downstairs. We may find a way to escape."

Shielding the *ghee* lamp carefully with one hand, she led the way, her face like Chinese porcelain in the reflected light and her eyes gleaming with courage. There was one turn, then another short flight. At the foot she paused, holding up a hand too late to turn Virginia back. They stood together, staring, silent. Neither had ever imagined, or thought it possible to imagine, anything to equal the filth of that crypt, which was the home—the heart—the place of celebration of the Kaligaon mystery.

The floor was unguessably deep in refuse of countless generations, but that was the least offensive part of it. There were nameless horrors. Leering through the leaping shadows, groups of statuary represented vice and torture in every conceivable form.

"Turn back!" said the Ranee, clutching Virginia's arm. They climbed the stairs, their nostrils choking with the smell, their senses reeling.

"They grinned!" gasped Virginia, leaning against the wall. "I swear they did."

"No, it was the movement of the shadow."

"What shall we do? We must get out of here."

"I think we have two chances," said the Ranee. "Rana Raj Singh may perhaps have found a way across the hills. If so, he would have to come by Kaligaon to reach Narada."

"Too thin," said Virginia. "Can't you think of a better solution than that?"

"There is nobody more splendidly resourceful than my prince," the Ranee answered proudly.

"What is the other chance?"

"Brazenose Blake. He is a strange man. I have known him to do all sorts of unexpected things. Sometimes he annoys me to the point of exasperation by treating me as if I were his daughter. He might—I don't know why I think so, but he might have ridden out to meet us. He would certainly have come to meet us if he thought there were any danger brewing. If he did he will have seen the broken road. He will have seen Asoka's footprints. He may have followed and brought my soldiers with him."

"Oh, oh, I hope not!"

"Why?"

"My dear, I'm not conventional. I'm not a prude. But I would rather die than be found by him in this place. Don't you understand?"

The Ranee nodded. She understood in part at any rate. For about two minutes she was silent, holding the lamp, staring straight at Virginia's eyes but seeming to see far beyond them.

"This place is built of wood," she said at last.

"What of it?"

"I am going to burn it. Then, if they kill us, I shall at least have done the best I could."

"There may be people somewhere in the building."

"I don't care. Open that door—not wide—just enough so that we can escape in a hurry. It may burn faster than we think."

VIRGINIA drew the bolt and moved the door outward an inch or two. Suddenly she closed it—shot the bolt again.

"The whole place is full of people!"

"They will go when it burns," said the Ranee. "Draw the bolt again. You wait here, it won't take me a minute."

She carried all three lamps downstairs into the crypt, for the sake of the *ghee* that would help to start the woodwork burning, but it took her longer that she expected. Listening at the door, opening it again a fraction of an inch, Virginia heard scores of naked feet go shuffling across the temple floor toward the entrance. There was an alarm of some sort; they were in a hurry; in a moment the temple was empty again.

She opened the door wider, keeping her fingers on the bolt in case she should have to shut it suddenly. She thrust her head through, then her shoulders, peering into the gloom, a bit confused by the strong light shining through the temple entrance. Suddenly she heard the brass door on her right hand open—heard, too, what sounded like horses' footsteps. She shut the door tight and shot the bolt.

Apparently no sound could penetrate that door. She drew the bolt and opened it again, a fraction of an inch—then wider. Some one seized the door in both hands, wrenching it out of her grasp.

"Miss!" said a startled *babu*, blinking at her through platinum rimmed spectacles, "who are you?"

"My name is Blackstone."

"You! Are you alone? Where, then, is her highness?"

"Who are you?" Virginia asked him.

Bamjee came inside and closed the door, leaving only a crack that let a stream of dim light fall on Virginia's face.

"I am Bamjee—B. A.—*babu*—per-

sonal friend of—" Then he hesitated.

"Where is her highness? Oh, my God, where is her highness?"

"She is downstairs."

"Doing what, for the love of Krishna?"

"Burning the place, I believe."

"And you stand there calmly? Gods, but you have nerve—and she has genius! That was exactly what I had intended to do! I was on my way to do it."

"Why? Who are you?"

"I am intimate personal friend of—of a certain gentleman. Miss—can you keep a secret?"

"Why?"

"Because—this friend of mine has confided in me—he is deeply in love—he dreads to be found in this place—by the lady whom he loves."

"But why tell me about it—and why now? Hadn't you better go and help the Ranee set the place on fire?"

"Miss, he loves you!"

"Me? What on earth do you mean? Who is he?"

"Brazenose Blake, Esquire, C. B., C. S. I., *et cetera*! But if you tell him that I told you he will kick me all the way to Bombay. How did you and her highness get here, for the love of—no matter, she'll tell me herself."

He went groping down the dark stairs, calling: "Your highness—your highness—here I am, your highness—this is Bamjee!"

The door opened. Virginia Blackstone stepped into the shadow. A voice that she instantly recognized shouted: "Bamjee! Where in the devil are you? Look sharp, like a good chap. Do you want help?"

Bamjee's voice came upstairs with the words all mixed up by the echoes. Blake took a stride toward the stair-head—stopped—stared.

"Virgie?" he gasped.

"Bray!"

"For the love of God, how did you get here?"

"The same to you! The point is, can we get out?"

"Where is the Ranee?"

"Downstairs, trying to set the place on fire. A *babu* who calls you his intimate friend has gone to help her."

Blake laughed, a trifle awkwardly. "I'd better go, too. I have horses for you and the Ranee. If the place burns, perhaps we can all escape in the confusion. We'll try at any rate. It's our one chance."

HE strode toward the stairs, but crimson light came forth to meet him. Framed in the glow came the Ranee, Bamjee following.

"Trust you!" she laughed. "Have you seen Quorn?"

"No, but I've horses for you. This way."

He led in a hurry, brought both horses through the brass door, tossed the reins to Bamjee and turned to help the women mount. But the Ranee vaulted to the saddle, so he held a stirrup for Virginia.

"Do you think I would go and leave you here?" she asked him. "What do you take me for?"

"You must. Oh, dammit, mount! Don't argue. The whole place will be a furnace in about a minute."

She mounted because she knew he would have lifted her unless she did. The door burst open from imprisoned gas, belching a cloud of crimsoned smoke into the temple. The horses plunged and staggered on the slippery stone floor. Blake seized the reins and led them, Bamjee clinging gamely to the Ranee's off rein.

"*Sahib!*" cried Bamjee. "What—"

Where the street had been, a torrent surged around the temple steps. It plunged down side streets. It was undermining houses. Men on roofs were watching building after building sway, heave, stagger and go crashing into its neighbor until Kaligaon seemed to fall like a pack of cards. The head of the temple steps was ten feet higher than the street, but the whole interior was now a roaring mass of flame and the heat was unendurable. A flame licked through the open door and caught the dry carved timbers.

"Ride, your highness! Plunge in!" Blake commanded. "Follow her!" he ordered, turning to Virginia. He slapped both horses on the rump. They plunged into the raging stream, shoulder deep—swam with it, feeling for bottom and leaping, dodging débris and obstructions—and were out of sight in less than half a minute.

"Come on, Bamjee, we're next. Can you swim? Lie on your back if you can't and I'll try to tow you."

"Wait, *sahib* — wait! Is that Asoka?"

There was no mistaking Quorn or his enormous elephant, heading downstream toward them.

"Crazy, mad, bewildering country—a god pops out of a box whichever way you turn," said Blake. "He has seen us, too. He's coming."

But the heat behind was unendurable. They had to wade into the water knee-deep. Then they had to duck to keep their skin from blistering. An upper floor came crashing down and burst the paving of the floor below. Flames spurted through every crack and cranny, curling upward, caught in the rising wind and blown to white heat. It was doubtful, too, whether Asoka could breast the flood and come to a standstill near the steps.

"Come on, Bamjee—better try our luck!"

Blake jumped in, seizing Bamjee by the collar, dragging him in backward.

Asoka, cooled by the water and pleased with himself for having done some truly elephantine damage, now obeyed Quorn's orders, ducking like a submarine in dread of the thunderous flames but following Blake and Bamjee — gaining on them—overtaking them where débris choked the street and made a boiling cataract. Quorn reached for Blake's hand, passed him astern toward the *howdah*, holding the half-drowned Bamjee until Blake had scrambled in, then helped Blake haul Bamjee high and dry.

"Now *juldee!* *Juldee!* Hurry, you big sucker!"

Asoka climbed the débris, plunging on the far side.

"They're down-street somewhere."

"Sir, I seen 'em."

There were places where the water raged so deep that Asoka could bury himself beneath it without touching bottom. But the gate of the city was built on slightly rising ground that split the stream in two, destroying buildings to right and left, but leaving a long island in the midst. The Rancee and Virginia stood there, struggling to loose their horses' water-tightened girths. They were safe for the moment.

But the city gate was closed; and on the roofs of near-by buildings an increasing swarm of Kaligaon's enraged citizens was gathering, bent on vengeance in the face of disaster. Tiles came hurtling through the air to an accompaniment of yells and curses. As Asoka set his forefeet on the firm road and came up dripping another group of men came running two by two along the city wall. Blake scrambled to the ground to loosen the girths.

"Mount!" he commanded. "Hurry! Can Asoka break that gate, Quorn?"

"No, sir."

"Turn to the left then. Look for a gap in the wall. The water must have burst through somewhere."

But the narrow street was choked with floating débris, so that even Asoka had to struggle to get by, and the only chance the horses had was to follow him and leap into the gaps he made. Pursuit began, howling and venomous, men swarming along the wall and over roofs to attack from four sides. Quorn saw a place where the wall was broken, but the gap was choked with debris, jammed tight; not even Asoka could have tackled it.

"BETTER turn and try some other way, sir."

"Keep on going!" Blake commanded. "There'll be another gap somewhere."

Suddenly a fifty yard long section of the wall tottered and fell, undermined by the flood. Asoka charged the gap, the horses following.

The men on the wall descended on the far side, meaning to attack on firm ground as the fugitives reached the open, knowing they would have to turn again to reach the high road and avoid the deep ravine that followed the line of the wall a hundred yards away. The men on the housetops followed them, hurrying like monkeys. There were two or three hundred men to deal with, armed with sticks and knives—religion down-wind—bent on murder.

As Asoka scrambled through the gap, the horses following, Blake leaned forward from the *howdah*.

"Ride straight at 'em, Quorn. Make a gap in their ranks. Then turn and keep on charging. Keep it open. Give the women a chance to break through."

"Sir to you, sir. But no need. Then's the Rajputs coming—Rana Raj Singh—jes' see that sucker ride! Sixteen — eighteen — twenty — four-and-twenty men behind him. We're all right. I guess they saw that temple burning and came to get a look-see. Maybe they ain't welcome, eh? And maybe them varmints don't know what a Rajput's sabre means—look at 'em! Did you ever see men run that fast?"

It was a rather breathless meeting, Rana Raj Singh curtly answering the Ranee's questions as to how he found a road to Kaligaon.

"Was it you who burned that temple?" he demanded, smiling as she nodded. "Then make the most of it. Go home and let Narada know you did it. It will be a lesson to the Brahmins. They will yield to you for fear you may burn their own hives. Rajputs!—threes right—march—canter!"

On the way home Quorn accepted a cigar from Blake and grew communicative.

"Nice young leddy, sir."

"You mean Miss Blackstone?"

"Right. Too bad she's sweet on some one."

"How so?"

"Her and me had quite a confab at the halfway bungalow. There was a mess o' snakes there—sort o' frightened her. I made a pot o' coffee. She and I got kind o' chummy. Lord, but old Asoka's tired—this'll serve him for a week's excitement. Wished you'd seen him go a-rolling when he pulled the props loose and the river broke through. Mighty nearly drowned him—me too."

There was a long silence, Blake crowding down his curiosity. At last he said, too casually:

"Of course. I forgot for the

moment that you and she are both Americans. I suppose you found a lot to talk about."

"One thing mainly, sir. A leddy that's in love but don't want nobody to know it talks o' nothing else. That's human natur'. That young leddy talked around you north, south, east an' west, not mentioning your name no more than half a hundred times. It's too bad. She thinks you'll think she came on purpose for to back you in a corner."

"Oh, no, she could never think that."

"And she thinks, sir, that you'll hate her for it."

"No," put in Bamjee, sprawling in his corner of the *howdah*, limp yet from his ducking, "she can never think that. I have told her, *sahib*, I enjoy your inmost confidence. I told her—"

"Oh, damn!" burst out Blake—then shouted: "Rana Raj Singh! Do you think one of your fellows would mind riding in the *howdah* and lending me his horse? I'm afraid of a chill in these wet clothes unless I can keep moving."

The exchange was made in sixty seconds. All the way home Brazenose Blake and Virginia Blackstone ambled side by side, until the Ranee left her prince's side at last and overtook them.

"You two!" she exclaimed. "You two! Why is it I can't find any one but Quorn to come and live in Narada and help me rule the place? I suppose you'll marry now and both of you will go away forever. Damn! Well, I'll meet you again in the next life. I'll probably know better by then. I will keep you quarreling instead for years and years. But what a lot a Ranee has to learn—and what a time it takes to learn it all!"

THE END.



"Some one said you'd boxed a bit yourself," Prather said superciliously

Reverse Knock-Out

A man of the Navy will boast he can lick a civilian "with one arm tied behind his back"—and that was the sort of fighting that faced one-time Fleet champ Bill Rodes

By EUGENE CUNNINGHAM

BILL RODES came gloomily down the port gangway of the lean, gray little Shenandoah. He jumped six feet—light and sure of foot as any cat—to the thwart of the cruiser's motor sailing-launch. He sat down, with his brief case of "Papers—confidential" beside him. He was out of humor with everything beneath the white incandescence of the Mexican sun, this morning. He kept blue eyes grimly straight ahead.

But as the engineer pushed in his

clutch and the motor-sailer chugged toward the jumbled white houses on the beach, which made the port of La Cruz, the cox'n looked at Rodes, then at the Shenandoah's sister cruiser, the Tedrick. He shook his head and looked at the big, grim chief yeoman again. And, of course, fell to talking of the subject which Rodes most wanted to have left unmentioned.

"He's a big, damn swell-head, that civilian, Prather," the cox'n grunted. "But Tuffy Ditmar will testify that

he's some battler. Yes, sir! Tuffy, Fleet heavy champ, pride o' the Tedrick, he was took by a civilian like Dewey took Manila! I never took much stock in college fighters till I see y' fight the first time, Bat. But after that—

"Well, last night, when this Prather stood up an' said he would like to mingle mugs with the Fleet champ, an' they announced him as 'Perhaps the greatest heavy whom college circles have ever known,' an' some o' the crew started laughin', I says to 'em: 'Yeh! Maybe Ditmar'll kill him. Maybe he's a college cream-puff. But y' want to remember Fleet Champion Battlin' Rodes, my sons! Y' want to remember *he* shipped in the Navy out o' Princeton. An' y'll admit y' can't call him a cream-puffer!'"

"Thanks," Rodes grinned dryly. He had refereed the Prather-Ditmar fight at the Shenandoah's smoker, the night before.

"*Dios mio!*" the cox'n grunted. "I wish y' hadn't busted that right o' y'rs, Bat! Y'd murder Ditmar and Prather both!"

"Thanks," Rodes nodded, with a one-sided grin.

He hardly heard. For he was seeing again what had sent him into the depths, last night, as he looked carelessly out of the ring. Seeing Vivian Drake's vivid face with its wide, clear hazel eyes, crowned by shining hair that was neither gold nor auburn, but an amazingly lovely combination of the two.

As he stared—gaped—at the sister of the newly-arrived American vice-consul where she sat beside Dean Prather and her brother, almost had Rodes bent his fingers to touch the wallet in his pocket. For in a tiny chamois bag in that wallet still lay the big solitaire she had fairly

flung in his face, at Princeton, four years before.

"Vivian! Vivian!" he had said without sound. "After all this time, to come back and open it all again. And—it hurts just as much. At least as much!"

Framed upon the huddle of white houses, he could see the picture of the other time. He had told her that she was playing around with fat little Curtis too much. And she had spiked Rodes's guns by reference to one Monette Harding's obvious worship of a certain letter man and All-American back—Bill Rodes.

"She broke our engagement one day; announced her engagement to Art Curtis the next," Rodes muttered under his breath.

Within two hours of hearing the word, Bill Rodes had been A.W.O.L., forever, from all the pleasant things and places he had known for nearly four years. Had gone on a bust which had ended—somehow, hazily—in Norfolk and a uniform. And now, the long trail had crossed the trail of Vivian and Surry Drake. In ten minutes he would see Surry again—old Surry, who had been his roommate and prospective brother-in-law. It was queer!

THE motor-sailer came in to the rough landing. The cox'n asked Rodes if he was bound for the consulate. Rodes nodded grimly. So grimly that the cox'n stared dumbly, wondering.

"I won't be coming back until afternoon," Rodes told him.

He went up the street toward the consulate. He walked slowly. He dreaded the meeting with Vivian; rather dreaded that with Surry. Funny! Happy-go-lucky Surry Drake a vice-consul!

Then he forgot Surry in remembering Dean Prather, that burly Yale man who was the west coast representative of his father's great Mundo Oil Company. Evidently Prather had met the Drakes somewhere in the States. He and Vivian seemed wonderfully friendly. So now Prather was the big, hairy-chested he-man, he was!

Bill Rodes went sullenly from the street through the passage into the patio of the consulate and stopped to look about him. There was nobody in the patio, so he crossed to the door of that long, dusky room which served the consuls of La Cruz as office. He wondered just what he would say to Surry. But there was no sign of that big young man inside. Nobody there?

A small, slim figure, all in starched blue linen, with a touch of white at cuffs and throat, materialized from a deep wicker chair, dropping a magazine. For a long moment, they stood staring at each other. Vivian was first to move.

"Hello, Billy," she said carelessly, as if four hours, instead of four years, lay between this meeting and the last, furious encounter three thousand miles away. "We saw you, last night, refereeing. It surprised me—seeing you in uniform. But Surry said it was just like you, joining the Navy!"

Rodes merely nodded. Staring at her as if to make up in a moment for all arrears, he knew that she was still the One Girl.

"Why didn't you marry Curtis?" he demanded abruptly, though he had not meant to ask the question. "Your engagement was in the paper. I saw it and—"

"I—oh, let's don't go into childhood agonies, Billy," and she smiled. "They were all frightfully real to us, then, of course.

"We were all tremendously serious at the time. But one does manage to survive—perhaps even to smile at the memory."

"One may," he admitted, putting his papers on the table and moving them very carefully. "But there are exceptions, too. Now, take blue eyes, for instance. One has blue eyes in childhood. One may grow up—who can deny it!—and looking backward with the brown eyes of maturity, smile at the thought of days when one's eyes were blue. *Segur' Miguel!* Sure Mike! But—suppose one's eyes don't change? In other words, suppose, in all seriousness—"

"Surry is threatening to wallop you for not letting him know where you were, all these years," she said hastily, but with a flush that weakened the effect of her careless tone. "I came down with him to set his household in order. It was like going to the ends of the earth, in prospect. But when we found Dean Prather here—and now you, of course—it makes La Cruz seem no more than a suburb of the home town."

Rodes nodded, with grim face and upward lift of a corner of his tightened mouth. For the moment he had actually forgotten Prather.

"That was a thrilling fight, wasn't it? Oh, when Dean came up from the floor and rushed into your Navy man, I was screaming at the top of my voice, but in that pandemonium you couldn't hear me—"

"Oh, yes! I heard you," he said quietly. "It reminded me of— Well, it used to be that, no matter how enormous the crowd in any stadium, I could hear you... But that, of course, you don't recall. It is merely one of the agonies of childhood; like the disasters that overtook your pet doll...

Where's his excellency the vice-consul?"

DEAN PRATHER sauntered through the doorway before she had time to answer. Big, arrogant, handsome, he glanced at Rodes carelessly and grinned at Vivian.

"Where's Surry?" he asked.

"In town. He'll be back soon. Let me present Mr. Rodes, Dean. You met him officially last night."

"Oh, yes! Yes!" Prather nodded carelessly. "The referee. Some one said that you boxed a bit yourself—used to be Fleet champion. Ditmar took the belt from you, didn't he? Have you retired from the chamois-shoving, nowadays?"

It seemed to Rodes that Prather was a shade too patronizingly careless. It was sufficiently well done, though, to impress the girl. Prather's tone was quite kindly! He was manifestly putting an inferior at his ease. Rodes grinned amusedly:

"Yes—quite. My physician refuses to permit me to indulge in that sort of athletics. He insists that I ornament the sidelines nowadays and let the youngsters play about. You see, I suffered a compound fracture of ulna and radius in my right arm and the surgeon fears a recurrence, with permanent injury, even crippling."

Surry Drake rushed in. He nodded with absent politeness to Prather, then descended on Rodes with a whoop and broadest of grins. Prather's brows climbed, and Vivian drew him outside.

"You're about ready to leave the Navy to its fate, aren't you?" Surry inquired, as he and Bill sat down to grin at each other.

"I'll go north on the Glacier, three weeks from to-morrow. Thus endeth the spree! Dad has arranged for an

especially corpulent fatted calf and my name on an office door. He bought a lot of western Texas land, one time, expecting potash or something. It's all decorated, now, with cute little oil wells. I think I'm to be dad's body-guard. Keep the Foreign Mission Societies and so on off his neck. There'll be plenty of managing to do. A half dozen holding companies. We still have the mines."

"Did you—have a chance to talk to—Vivian?"

"Yes, I fear so... We have walked the Paths Divided. She has become a philosopher, I find. She smiles tolerantly at thought of all the agonies of childhood. While I—don't!"

"The little devil!" Surry growled. "If you hadn't been so damn' quick to skip it would've been O.K., Bill. Curtis lasted a month, to the day. I'm not feeding your vanity when I say that he was treated like a tame poodle—as you never were! There were at least a dozen boy friends to follow. Last two years, Viv's been kicking around Europe with mother. No casualties."

Surry fumbled with the things on his desk; shrugged ruefully:

"It wasn't all hero-worship that time, my son! You were the Big Guy of the team and all that; but she was wild about you—as wild as you were. D'you know, she's got that picture of you in the regimentals, yet! The four pieces pasted together. But since we ran into Prather at Los Angeles, some weeks back—

"He's a big, impressive devil, you know. Persistent as all hell, too. You ought to remember how Viv worships fighting beef. Last night's were her first fights. She was wild about 'em. And Prather coming up off of the canvas, 'bloody but unbowed' and all

that—well, he's nearer ace high than he ever was before!"

"Reckon!" Rodes nodded grimly. To himself he said: "Oh, for a right, again! Then bring on the Prathers and Ditmars!"

"You used to be a tolerable battler, Bill. Fight any, in the service? What's the matter?"

"Ditmar took the Fleet championship belt from me—as Prather just informed Vivian very sweetly. The fact that I had whipped him once, and that he took it after I broke my arm and he was all set to be knocked out doesn't signify. Surry, this damn' business has got my goat! I'm clear fed up on being a sidelines cripple. I'd like to take on Prather for about four rounds! I admit that I don't like him any at all, to speak of. Could you arrange an exhibition bout—it'd have to be ashore, or our fleet doctor would veto it on account of my arm—for, say, to-morrow night?"

"Can you take him, Bill? I mean, have you a real chance to? If you think you have, I can get your doctor off on a hunting trip—he said last night he wanted to go soon—and handle the other details. I'm a diplomat now, you know! But can you *take* him?"

RODES merely nodded. Surry grinned soulfully and got up. He swaggered out and came back presently with Prather—staring contemptuously—and Vivian, who regarded the grim, inscrutable Rodes with an odd' light in her hazel eyes. A queerly calculating expression. Rodes looked only at Prather.

"So you want me to take you on?" Prather demanded, almost incredulously. "I don't think I ought to, Surry! I was never any good at the ordinary exhibition. I never learned to pull my

punches and fan the air impressively. If you were twenty pounds heavier, Rodes, and— I thought you said you had a broken arm, that kept you out of the ring! No! I'm not fighting any crips. What's the good of it? What does it prove?"

"You licked Ditmar last night," Rodes drawled gently. "Now he passes for Fleet champ. But at the present moment it doesn't mean much—the title. You've licked him. So have I. We're even there. But I went into the ring with Ditmar when he was at his very best. He was two years younger, for one thing. He'd just been acting as sparring partner for the contender for the middle-weight championship of the world. And he hadn't just fought a six-round bout with a husky gob, as he had last night when he took you on. In the bout where I lost my title I put him on the canvas five times in the first and second rounds and he was staggering, waiting to be knocked out, when I broke my arm."

Rodes paused to shrug, then went on:

"Excuse my using the perpendicular pronoun so much. But I have to boil down the statistics for hurried presentation. I watched the affair last night rather critically, because I have always believed that, if our surgeon would permit, I could go into the ring and take the belt back from Ditmar. The whole situation comes to this: I'm curious to know how I'd stack up against the 'greatest heavyweight in college circles.' If you will give me opportunity to settle the point—"

"It's just this, Prather," shrugged Surry the diplomat airily. "Ditmar is a cheese champ. Everybody knows that Bill Rodes could take a shipload of Ditmars and such like a fake healer taking your coin. Now, it doesn't seem

fair to Service men that you should have the credit and the glory of licking the Fleet's finest—unless you've done that! As you haven't, nothing but a decision over Rodes can place you."

"All right!" Prather said grimly. "You asked for it, remember! It's on your own neck if you get battered, Rodes. For I've warned you that I don't pull my punches."

Surry turned, picking up his Panama.

"I'm going out to the ship and get the doctor out of the way. Bill, you come by in a couple hours and I'll tell you what I've accomplished. Where'll we stage it? Your patio, Prather? You can string some extra lights across. Walk a way with me and we'll talk."

SO Rodes was left with Vivian, who looked at him with eyes shining and spots of color on her cheeks like those which had flushed them the night before.

"Billy! This is—"

"Pure childishness!" he grinned. "Juvenility! Kid stuff!"

"I don't care if it is! It may be juvenile; it may be barbarous. But it thrills me to see—as last night—two strong brave men struggling like titanic Greek marbles come to life! Hitting each other with almost superhuman force. Being knocked down and getting up again hurt and bloody, but absolutely unconquered! It is a reversion to the primitive, doubtless. It is brutal—but magnificently brutal."

"My goodness!" he said amusedly, but looking down at her with—somehow—more of happiness than he had known for years. "The same little pagan! The same little savage She! You should have been born in the mid-Neanderthal. You could have watched two cave men fighting for your favors—and loved the winner."

"Not just the winner! That's not fair! It isn't just admiration for the winner, but for the man who loses, even, but fights all the way. With his fists or with other weapons—the more modern weapons. I like and admire a fighting man. There's no use denying it. I do. I'm certainly glad that you won't let Dean take the Navy belt without fighting."

He put out a light hand and patted her shoulder. She smiled up at him, and his hand tightened on her arm. Then Dean Prather came back. Rodes cursed inwardly, and made his departure.

He came back from errands in town to find the doctor's hunting trip arranged and to find Surry raving because he had to go with the surgeon. Rodes laughed at him and went back to the ship. He watched Lieutenant Hoyt, the surgeon, go down the gangway ladder into a motor sailing launch. When the launch was beached he went into his office and sat for an hour. Then Bill got up. He went into the cabin and told his story to the Wild Bull—as the Shenandoah's men knew their commander.

"Do you think you can take him?" the commanding officer demanded, scowling. "I don't want any slaughter and you've only your left, you know."

"I don't think he can lay a glove on me, solidly."

"All right, then! We'll be more than pleased—the Tedrick's commanding officer and I—to see the Navy on top again."

THE ring was set up in the patio of Prather's house.

It was much the same audience which had watched the bouts aboard the Shenandoah, except that the num-

ber of the ships' companies had been reduced to twenty-five from each cruiser; the lucky men who had drawn seat tickets in improvised lotteries.

Rodes used a bedroom opening upon the patio for his shift into the old Navy-blue jersey and shorts which had gone through so many Homeric battles in service rings. Ensign Marron, the Shenandoah athletic officer, was beside him, scowling nervously. He jerked his thumb:

"They're ready for us. Luck to you, Rodes! You need it!"

As he came calmly down the aisle toward the ring, the two ships' companies' representatives raised a wild roar. Rodes nodded, but his eyes were wandering, hunting for Vivian. He found her between the Wild Bull and the Tedrick's skipper. She waved and smiled at him. He climbed through the ropes, grinning.

Prather got a dutiful round of applause as he came grinning into the ring. He tossed a gorgeous Mandarin robe to his house-boy and flexed himself on the ropes. Ensign Marron announced the bout as a four-round exhibition between one of the greatest of amateur heavyweights who was conqueror of the Fleet champ, and—he paused impressively—an ex-champion who in two brief years of Service fighting had made ring history that the Navy could never forget. The Tedrick and Shenandoah men roared agreement.

The referee was "Rough-house" Kelleher, a conductor on the Mexican railway and, in his day, one of the greatest non-champion lightweights of the world. He stood in mid-ring, brisk, gray-haired, flat-nosed and tin-eared. He called Rodes and Prather together. His instructions were brief: Clean breaks! Action's what makes a fight!

Matt Dunleavy, huge water tender, was in Rodes's corner as he had been so many times during the ex-champion's fighting days. He took the old bathrobe and regarded it affectionately. But only for a moment. The bell clanged. There came a tension in the audience that was palpable. The atmosphere was electric here to-night. The spectators sensed the feud-spirit; the drama of a great ex-champion staging a come-back against great odds.

Rodes loafed out of his corner. But Prather came in a savage rush to meet him. They ignored the touching of hands. Instead, that long left of Prather's stabbed like a lance at the face of Rodes. But Rodes's head moved the merest trifle and Prather missed, to take a torrid short left to the body. Rodes floated away, his expression the most negligent.

Prather, rushing again, was wild with a left hook. Rodes danced around him, rap-rap-rapping Prather's face with stinging left. Prather dropped chin on chest and waded in. Rodes drilled him twice with left to body.

Ducking, bobbing, a swaying, elusive target that was really no target at all, Rodes drove that "educated" left of his wherever a joint showed in Prather's armor. At the bell, Prather was plowing into one tantalizing glove that was like twenty.

"If y' had even a secondhand right," groaned Dunleavy, "we'd be halfway back to the ship, now! Done for the night!"

"If you had a right—" it was Ensign Marron poking his head marvelingly through the ropes—"in common decency, we'd have to give him a club! I never saw anything like it!"

The bell picked Prather off his stool. It hurled him across the ring. His square, ruggedly-handsome face was a

vicious, concentrated mask out of which shone glaring blue eyes. Rodes stood up deliberately. Prather panned him triumphantly in the corner. With a savage grunt, he slammed right and left at Rodes. He snarled at him, "Fight!"

RODES put hands on knees and squatted under those tremendous drives. He looked up at them, grinning, face sidelong. He flashed out under them, came erect and pivoted. With all the momentum of revolving body, he hooked a left under Prather's heart. The big amateur was already off balance. He slumped and his mouth dropped open. He came to his knees on the canvas.

"Yaaaaaaay! Yaaaaaaay! Yaaaaaaay!" the two ships' companies—and, it is to be feared, their officers—bellowed. For the incredible was coming true! Battling Rodes—old Bat, best of 'em all—was staging a come-back, one-handed, against a good man.

Prather was up with a three-count. He was ready to sail in. But he found his head held down by the slim, panther-quick ex-champion. The whole audience—with perhaps one or two exceptions—set the still air trembling with bellows of amusement, as Prather split space with a dozen wild terrific lefts and rights which were wide half a yard. Rodes looked down at the impotent, furious figure with a small, amused grin, head a little on one side.

He caught Prather extended for one of those herculean swings and tightened the grasp he had on Prather's neck. He jerked forward and Prather hit the canvas on his nose. He came scrambling up and found that Rodes had danced away across the ring and was smoothing his dark hair thought-

fully. Prather snarled and covered the space between with a mad, blind charge.

Rodes made no move to retreat. He elbowed right and left aside and whipped up a left uppercut that put Prather on his heels. He popped him twice in the face with stinging lefts.

But Rodes's contemptuous manner was purely a veneer. One solid punch of Prather's would be disastrous to the campaign he was waging. His only hope was to keep the big fellow from landing that blow—and, while evading it, make it seem to referee and audience that he wasn't working hard. He feared that Prather could absorb all the punishment he could hand out with the left and finish strong enough for ten rounds more.

So he grinned with artful carelessness—and watched like a hawk. In and out and over and under, he weaved away from Prather's numbing punches. At the bell, he clapped Prather lightly on the shoulder.

"Not bad!" he told him in a patronizing tone that carried out into the audience. "For an amateur!" he added, over his shoulder, as he went briskly to his corner.

Every officer, every man, in that audience who had ever seen the old champion, Battling Rodes, in action, stared. For never in his ring career had Rodes played the smart Alec; never had he seemed contemptuous of his opponent. They were used to it from the lately deposed Ditmar. It would have seemed natural from Prather. But it was entirely unlike the Rodes they knew, the impassive, flashingly efficient fighting machine.

"I've got to take this decision, Matt," Rodes muttered in Dunleavy's ear, catching that same expression of surprise in his second's eyes. "So I've got to make all this look as if I were

playing with some five-year-old. Damn it all, how I hate this kind of a fight! I'd give my note for ten thousand to have a right!"

He went out for the third inwardly furious, though his grin was as wide and careless as ever. Prather made no rush at him, this time. Instead, he came deliberately to meet Rodes in mid-ring and waited for Rodes to come to him. Rodes feinted with the right; hooked Prather lightly to the face, then tied him up in a tight clinch. Kelleher broke them.

They slid together again like two drops of quicksilver, and Rodes buried his left in Prather's body for sheer savage pleasure in feeling it land. But that was not his campaign! He was made aware of it when Prather struck his first effective blow of the whole fight—a solid right hook to the head. That was not so good!

Rodes clinched and let Prather wrestle him around the ring. His head cleared. Not a bit more of that monkey business, no matter how disgusted he was with a runaway fight. Oh, if his right was only capable of use!

HE tightened up, and for the rest of the round focused on two things: he made Prather miss, and he drove his left regularly to Prather's heart.

He concentrated on that one spot and evolved half a dozen different ways of landing on it. He ducked under Prather's swings and hooked to the heart. He tied Prather up and drove savage short-arm lefts to the heart. Weaving inside of Prather's guard, he uppercut him, then whipped a torrid left down—again to the heart.

The unchanging, relentless attack began to slow Prather down. He was working twice as hard as Rodes, any-

way; and now he began to take all the punishment.

So they came out for the fourth. Prather opened the round with a vicious, two-fisted attack before which Rodes had to give way. But as he backed off, he kept his rapier left going to Prather's face. He set the big man's nose bleeding and opened a cut on his right eye.

Against the ropes he weaved away from the savage barrage that Prather flung at him, and at every opening Rodes drove to the heart—with his left.

Once he forgot himself and snapped in a soft right. There came a savage twinge from the twisted arm to warn him that Dr. Hoyt had known what he was talking about, in speaking of the poorly knit ulna-bone.

He ignored the neuritic pain and grinned widely as he poured the left to Prather's face and body while seeming to float out of the other's reach. He drifted tantalizingly around the ring with Prather staking everything on a knock-out; drifted with that maddening grin and the fastest left that any in that audience had ever dreamed of seeing. The bell came. Kelleher hesitated not one brief second. He caught Rodes's right and pulled it high.

"Foot-racer!" yelled Prather contemptuously.

When he was dressed, Rodes looked eagerly for the girl. He found her, on the street between the two commanding officers. He thought that they would escort her to the consulate. With a small grin, he fell in behind them. And to him came her tantalizing voice:

"It was the most disappointing thing I ever saw in my life! I don't care what you say about tremendous skill. If one man is to do all the fight-

ing and the other man can win if he merely outruns his opponent, then I don't care for fighting. For it isn't fighting. I might as well outrun the heavyweight champion of the world and claim that I had beaten him. It was disgusting; utterly disgusting!"

Rodes whirled right on the cross-street that opened before him. So that was the result of the greatest defensive battle he had ever in his life put up! All it had got him was a verdict of "disgusting" from the only jury he cared about. Prather was adjudged a fighting man and he was a runner!

HE went stumbling savagely on and on, taking no heed to where he went. But, mechanically, he came back to the consulate. He stood staring at it.

"What was the use! I had better ask permission to go to the States on the next boat and get it over with. She'll be in to-morrow and—"

Out of a postern-gate in the consulate's wall a whitish figure darted suddenly. It vanished down the street, heading toward the water front at a staggering run. He looked like one of the consulate servants—and he was obviously terror-stricken—frightened to death.

On impulse, Rodes darted into the passage that led from patio to street. When he came to the stone-paved open square around which the old house was built, he saw the door of the consul's office showing as a yellow rectangle in the gray-white wall.

"I don't know anything about a list!" Vivian's voice came shrilly, with a note of panic, out of that door. "If my brother has it, I don't know where it is. I can't open the safe, I tell you! Let me go!"

Rodes streaked across the patio,

soundless on rubber soles. There were three men at the far end of the office. He could see Vivian's paper-white face and fear-widened eyes between them. Could see the hulking, lemon-skinned man who held her by the wrist and thrust his face almost into hers.

"YOU think we don' know you tell a lie!" the native snarled at her.

"You think we let one girl keep these list from us! You don' know! I tell it to you that you don' give to me these list, I take you to the camp, the camp of *revolucionarios*, an' give you to our soldiers! You tell me quick! Where are these list? The Federals steal our list and give to the consul, to send to Washington and try for recognition. We know! You don' give it an'—"

The only weapon in the room, which Rodes could see, was a bronze buffalo, a paper weight, on this end of the long table. He came inside with hand outstretched.

Vivian, the only one who faced the door, saw him. Relief that was prayerful came to horror-stricken face and eyes. He saw her lips form his name and red fury caught him. He snatched up the paper weight.

They whirled—the three Mexicans. The heavy weight hurtled toward the lemon-skinned leader as hard as Bill Rodes could throw it. The fellow ducked instinctively and the missile crashed into the face of another man. That one slumped to the floor. Then the leader and the other subordinate left the girl. They rushed Rodes, two men only a trifle smaller than himself, each with two arms—two arms that were efficient.

He fell instinctively into fighting stance—the stance of a left-handed man. He whipped up a left to the yel-

low face of the leader. It was like hitting a rock! It shook the Mexican, but he threw out his hands to grapple. Rodes side-stepped and jabbed the other man in the stomach.

It was the battle with Prather, all over again. He had to keep moving, flashingly, calling into play everything that he had of skill and ring generalship. For the thickset peon had a knife out, now. He snatched with his left hand, struck with his right.

How Rodes managed to evade all but the lightest of gashes was a mystery. But, somehow, he ducked and jabbed; twisted and turned and whipped over swift hooks that were hard enough only to check the two snarling Mexicans for an instant.

As he ducked in under the knife and heard his coat ripped from collar to skirt, Vivian's thin scream came to him.

"Hit them, Billy! Hit them!"

He thought grimly that he would like to! Even more that he would have liked hitting Dean Prather, earlier in the evening. For a one-armed man, he thought that he was doing rather well. The trouble was—he slid sideways from a down stroke of the long blade and drove his left to the leader's heart—this was no place for a one-armed man. It was just a matter of time until they cornered him. Then, curtains! Well, it was the best battle he had ever fought in his life. No "running away" in this battle.

They did corner him. They penned him against the table and he was short with a left swing. He saw the knife coming at him like a snake's darting head. Instinctively he twisted and drew in his stomach—and instinctively, too, he slammed his right to the jaw-angle of the knife-man in a long swing. There jumped to mind, as it con-

nected, memory of the right he had landed on Prather—the pain of it and the futility.

WITH impact of fist on jaw there shot up his arm a flash of agony that was like nothing he had ever known in his life. A sheet of flame seemed to rise in his head. It rocked him. Nauseated him. He knew that he was going to faint.

"Here! Here!" some part of him said to the sagging body. "Come on back and take your lickin'! Get off that canvas and make 'em kill you to lick you!"

It seemed to him that the inner struggle went on for ages. But when he could focus his eyes on externals again he found himself drawing back his right arm. And the knife-wielder was swaying forward in a way that Rodes knew well—eyes glassy and loose mouth looser than normal. He was through!

"The son of a gun!" Rodes told himself amazedly, as if addressing another person. "He's knocked out—with my right! Feature that!"

Automatically, moved by ring sense only, he pivoted and hung a chopping left hook on the chin of the yellow-faced man. It snapped that worthy's head back, and Rodes planted his feet and brought over the right from behind his knee. It landed on the button and the man dropped across the peon.

But if there had been agony with that first blow with the crippled arm, it was nothing to the wave of torturing pain which followed the dull snapping sound which blended with the *smack!* of knuckles meeting chin in this second, terrific blow. Desperately, like a man trying to swim upward out of black depths, he fought to keep consciousness.

The doorway was crowded abruptly with white-uniformed figures. Incredibly tiny voices came to Rodes through the swirling darkness that had swallowed him.

"He's broken his arm again!" one such voice cried out. "Give me a hand, somebody! He's out on his feet. Get me something for splints. Here! Here! Rodes! It's all over, man! Lie down and take it easy. Pull your punches, Rodes!"

He opened his eyes weakly and looked up into the face of the Wild Bull, which showed somewhat hazily beside the faces of the commanding officer and surgeon of the Tedrick. They were not looking at him, but at something behind him. He became conscious of a quick voice in that same direction.

"I didn't understand, until then. He wouldn't hit Dean with his right hand, because it wasn't worth breaking his arm just to knock Dean out. But when it was a real fight, he would make the sacrifice. But—he was always splendid in a fight. You see, we've known each other for years and—"

"Hello!" grunted the Wild Bull. "How do you feel, Rodes? Can you make it back to the ship? I think we can get some sort of *coche* to take you to the landing. We got those fellows you had stacked all over this deck. I imagine you might as well have killed them. For we turned them over to the Federals. It seems to me you put up your best fight of all time to-night!"

"I'll be ready to go—in a minute," Rodes nodded. Then, as they nodded, but stood watching him, he looked his commanding officer in the eye. "In—a minute!" he repeated; "just a min-

ute, if you get what I mean." They understood.

"Oh!" said the Shenandoah's skipper. "Come on out when your—minute's up."

RODES sat up. Vivian caught his shoulder with a little cry. He turned until he could see her face, and regarded her grimly—or, rather, he tried to look grim.

"All that idea of yours about conscious sacrifice in a worthy cause is Bunker Hill. I fought with everything I had—or thought I had—against Prather; and it was the same against those spiggoties from the beginning. I accidentally hit that fellow with my crippled hand—and I nearly went *blooie* when it landed. When I knocked that knifing gentleman out, nobody was as surprised as I! Another thing; nothing but the same brand of skill that you didn't like when I used it against Prather kept you from seeing me spread out before you, like a butcher shop. Well—guess that's about all."

He got up, facing away from her. He found that he could walk, if shakily.

"Billy," a small voice said behind him. "Billy... I never was blue-eyed, in childhood, was I? I don't recall that my eyes were ever anything but hazel. But—what I mean is—they haven't changed any. Not in the past four years. I think that you perhaps haven't been looking at them—as you might have looked—might look now! I mean—there are some boy-and-girl affairs one doesn't get over in spite of the passage of time."

"You mean," Bill Rodes corrected her, turning swiftly, "some which two don't get over!"

THE END.



"Slipped back there and did it with this," Donnelly grunted.

Voodoo'd

*Death stalks with knife and poison in a grim old Creole mansion
in New Orleans while Basil Boyean and the ill-fated
Juvenals search for the mysterious Nemesis*

By KENNETH PERKINS

Author of "The Gun Crusade," "The Mark of the Moccasin," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

BERTRAM JUVENAL was strangled and poisoned mysteriously in New Orleans while visiting his brother, Amos, at the historic Juvenal manse. The overseer, Bouche, convicted of the crime, was shot dead in attempting to escape.

A young Creole aristocrat, Basil Boyean, underwent a gland operation for "three-day chills." He was uneasy over the possibility of having acquired characteristics of Bouche, the dead

man from whom the gland extract had been taken.

Obsessed with the Juvenal case, Basil visited the manse, which had been converted into a boarding house, and, in a daze, spent the night there. The only other guest was Bertram's son, Lucien. The household consisted of Amos Juvenal, proprietor; his daughter, Ninon, and three Negro servants: Edipe, the butler; Zozo, the maid, and Gumbo Lou, cook.

This story began in the Argosy for May 10.

That night Lucien was slain in the same way his father had been. The next day Detective Donnelly learned from the proprietor that a secret panel provided a passageway between Boyean's room and Lucien's. The dead Bouche's finger-prints were found in Lucien's room!

Basil's mind was so confused that he did not know if he himself had committed the crime. Ninon accused him, but was unable to convince the police chief.

Lucien's brother, Jacques, was summoned to aid the investigation. That evening Jacques was alone with his cousin Ninon when a mysterious hand reached through the rotten woodwork and clawed at Jacques's neck, but did not kill him. Indications pointed to Uncle Amos as the arch-fiend. Basil, believing himself guilty, defended Amos and promised to produce the murderer within a few hours, whereupon the police chief put him in charge of the case.

Cedipe had a perfect alibi for the murder of Lucien, having been away all night; but investigation disclosed he was acting as a voodoo *papaloi* praying for some one's death.

Fearing that Jacques was the next prospective victim, Boyean persuaded him to take lodging for the night in a hotel half an hour distant from the mansion. About midnight Basil and Donnelly interrupted a voodoo ceremony Cedipe and Gumbo Lou were holding in the butler's room, and in the confusion some one attacked Basil and a huge urn was smashed. Uncle Amos was found dead after the confusion was over.

Boyeau believed that by hypnotism and voodoo suggestion he had been guilty, in a trancelike state, of killing Lucien and Amos; and he wrote out a

confession to that effect—when the discovery that Amos had been killed, not with the urn, but with some sharp object, gave Basil hope, and he destroyed the document.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RUBBER GLOVES.

WITH a feverish intensity Basil Boyean once more set himself to work. The duty that faced him was a strange one. It consisted in proving to himself that he was not a murderer.

Once more he tore a piece of paper from his notebook and began to write. Donnelly had returned to the lower part of the house. They were working on some good clews, he said, and as soon as anything important turned up he would let Boyean know.

It was a different sort of document that the young Creole began to compose this time. He was no longer addressing a statement to the police. He was writing to himself, trying with a frenzied eagerness to marshal his scattered thoughts.

I, Basil Boyean, did not kill Lucien Juvenal or his uncle, as the following seven points prove:

1. The transfer of personality from a dead man to one who is living is sheer balderdash.

2. My sudden loss of interest in the affairs of my own life, and my fascination for affairs previously alien to me—such as race horses, for example—was due to my crazed notion that I had turned into another man—i. e., Bouche. This whole morbid condition had no scientific foundation. It is a result entirely of my mental condition, aggravated by my talk with a friend at the Bourbon Club. The gland operation was utterly inconsequential. Indeed, it failed to serve its original pur-

pose—to lend me more vitality with which to fight my periodic fever. During the last three days, I have been subject to a high temperature. This itself might be blamed for my mental troubles.

3. There is no possible explanation of my supposed knowledge of the trap-door in the wall, through which it was necessary for me to pass, had I intended to murder Lucien Juvenal. My hypothesis that a hypnotized patient may learn hidden secrets is fantastic and untenable.

4. There was a poison in the claw marks on Lucien's throat. I had no knowledge of where such poison could be procured, nor have I detected any traces of poison on my own fingers. The post-mortem report indicated strychnine poisoning in the intestines. I have had no such drug in my possession. Nor did I at any time have a chance to put such a drug into the food of the murdered man.

5. The Bertillon report upon the bodies of Lucien Juvenal and his uncle indicated the use of rubber gloves by the attacker. I have had no rubber gloves in my possession.

6. My own finger marks found upon the throat of Lucien Juvenal may be explained by the fact that I made an examination of his wounds on the morning after his death.

7. This seventh point is the Unknown Quantity. It is as yet unsolved; the solution will be the name of the actual murderer.

Conclusion: I, Basil Boyean, am guiltless of these atrocities. The guilty man or woman will have to answer for all three murders, for the attack on Jacques Juvenal, and for the unjust conviction and death of Bouche.

The hypothesis of the police that the murders were all committed by the same man is indubitably correct. The actual murderer is a criminal of fiendish ingenuity. He has succeeded thus far in casting enough suspicion upon three different individuals to cause their conviction in any court of law. One of these hapless individuals, Anatole Bouche, paid unjustly with his life.

Finally, I must record, if there is the slightest atom of truth to this nonsense about heredity of criminal instincts through the transfer of glands, it has no bearing whatever upon my own case. For M. Bouche, whose glands were used in my operation, was not a criminal, but an innocent man!

BASIL had scarcely finished the last sentence of this strange document when Donnelly appeared again.

"Looks like we're gettin' somewhere," the detective said exuberantly. "We've locked the butler up, an' the cook has been sent to her room again—which is the same as bein' locked up in a cell. But we ain't worryin' so much about her. She wasn't the one that cracked me on the jaw. That crack was good enough to split her knuckles. Ask me, I ought to know. But there ain't a sign of nothin' on her knuckles. Skin's as smooth as a pig's ear. It's either the butler or Ma'm'selle Ninon who's goin' to tell us the answer."

"Mlle. Ninon!" Boyean exclaimed.

"Sure. The chief's goin' to give her the third degree right now. He said he'd like to have you on deck durin' the fun."

"You actually think Ninon's hand could have had any effect on that bulldog chin of yours!"

"Not hers, but her accomplice."

"Who was her accomplice?"

"Well, there's two possibilities—the butler or a ghost. Take your choice."

A slight gasp escaped Boyean's lips. "That might explain it."

"Explain what?"

"The uncanny feeling of that hand. It was cold and slippery. I fancied a dead hand had grasped my throat."

Both men stopped and stared at each other. The same thought had struck them simultaneously. They recalled

Ninon's description of a hand coming out of the dark.

Finally Boyean asked in a peculiar voice: "Has any one tried to explain how Bouche's finger-prints were found upon Lucien Juvenal's throat?"

"Bouche is dead," Donnelly replied falteringly.

"Do finger-prints lie?"

The squat little detective, ordinarily devoid of any emotion or imagination, shuddered, "You sure do bring up the most unpleasant ideas, Mr. Boyean!"

They went downstairs, each man concerned with his own thoughts and fears. In the parlor they found the chief sitting in one of the rattan arm-chairs, while Mlle. Ninon was standing under the light of the chandelier in front of him.

Ninon was sullen, defiant. Her gray lips trembled as she spoke. Her eyes glowed like burning coals through the wisps of jet black hair that hung over her forehead. The chief was evidently having an uncomfortable time, for Boyean observed that his rough rusty-colored forehead was damp.

"I'll tell you nothing of the affairs of this house," the girl was saying in a low-pitched trembling voice. "You come here with your law and bungle up our lives. You convict an innocent man, and your deputies shoot him to death like a dog. *Bien!* If you want clews to convict some one else—find them yourself."

Boyeau and Donnelly had slipped in quietly. They remained in the background during the interview, as timid but vitally interested spectators.

"I AM not asking for clews to convict any one else," the chief of police said. For the first time that Boyean remembered, he was nervously twisting his iron-gray mustache.

"All I want to do is to clear your deceased father of this business. The way things look—the way they have looked ever since I first came into this case—your father murdered his brother and Lucien in order to obtain the Juvenal estate. In the fracas down there outside the servants' quarters he was in turn killed. That would seem to end the case. The murderer fails to complete his plot. He succeeds in killing two men who stand in his way, but before he can deal with the third—I mean Jacques—he is himself killed."

"Very well," the girl retorted, with a toss of her head. "It closes the case. I am satisfied with that. I shall never press an investigation. My father is dead. An hour after this tragedy I am hounded by you shareefs and deputies. Let the case rest. I am satisfied."

"Well, I'm not," the chief said, with his first touch of acerbity. "And I might say it strikes me as strange that you yourself do not desire to clear your father of this stain."

There was a moment's silence at this. The chief and the girl glared at each other. The chief seemed to be regaining some of his habitual and professional equanimity.

It was the girl now, who was at a disadvantage. She was breathing heavily, fiercely, her hands were clenched tightly—so tightly that there were white spots on the copper-colored knuckles.

"Just what was your father doing when the Negroes back there were having their powwow?"

"He was reading."

"You were in the room?"

"I was trying to sleep. I was afraid. I wanted my father to stay in the room with me."

"According to the patrolman, the lights were out in the room. The win-

dows face on the street, so he had no doubt about it," said the chief.

"I did not say there was a light in the room. My father put it out. We sat there a long time in the dark."

"Yes. The patrolman testifies to that. It was several hours. But was your father merely reading—reading in the dark?"

"What else do you suppose he was doing?"

"I am asking you that."

"*Eh bien*, I am not answering."

The chief put his thumbs in his vest. He took a deep breath as if to start again on some onerous labor. "After the death of your father, your room was examined immediately. A blot of ink was on the table, that had scarcely dried. Likewise there was an ink stain on your father's middle finger. He was not reading. He was writing—writing something in the dark."

The girl's lips parted, showing a gleam of even pearly teeth.

"From my point of view," the chief went on, "there is something very significant about a man writing in the dark—and then meeting his death a few moments later. When you write something in the dark, it means that you are in a hurry to get a message upon paper. It might also mean that you are setting something down in words—and that you do not want to be seen writing them. Your father wrote these words. He then went down into the patio and was killed. But no message was found upon his person. What became of the message?"

THE chief paused for a reply, but none was forthcoming, so he went on: "Why was your father so anxious to put his message upon paper? Why didn't he wait until morning? Why didn't he wait until

he went into his own room and then write it? Why did some one snatch it away before any of us had a chance to go in and look over the room? Perhaps you yourself snatched the paper up from the table just as your father left? If that is true, what was your motive?"

"Are you through with your questions, *m'sieu'*?" the girl asked calmly.

"I am not through until I have the answers."

Ninon's delicate upper lip curled. "Then try and find the answers, *m'sieu'*. For I am very tired standing here."

The chief's face reddened. "All right, I'll keep you standing no longer." He turned to Donnelly. "Tell one of the boys to take her back to the dining room. She's not to go into any other part of the house. Let her go to the dining room and stay until I call her. There are plenty of chairs there."

After she had gone, the chief snapped off the end of a cigar and turned a flushed, scowling face to Basil.

"Well, Mr. Boyean, have you got the murderer yet?"

"It's two hours more until morning," the Creole answered. "Thus far I've succeeded in eliminating the most prominent suspect!"

"Well, I'm a couple laps ahead of you," the chief growled. "I've simmered the thing down to two suspects, and one is much more suspicious than the other."

"Just who is that?" Boyean asked.

"I'll let you tell me that. The answer's easy because it's the same answer to a whole lot of questions I've been asking myself since yesterday morning."

"What are the questions that point

to such an inevitable conclusion?" Boyean asked a bit skeptically.

The chief held up his massive hand and began to check off the points, counting his fingers.

"First, who's goin' to gain Jacques Juvenal's money if he is killed? I mean, who's getting it now that his father and brother and uncle are out of the way? Second, how did it happen that Jacques Juvenal was backed up against the wall in just the right position so that somebody could grab his neck by reaching through a narrow hole in the wall? It would take two persons to pull a neat trick like that, wouldn't it? The one who maneuvered him into the right position, then the other who reached through the wall."

Donnelly nodded, but did not interrupt his superior.

"Third, who's been trying against all objections on our part, against all common sense, to build up a case against you, Mr. Boyean? You were put into a room next to Lucien Juvenal's night before last, and Lucien was murdered. Coincidence? Oh, no! It was a clever choice of just the right moment—a setting of the stage, a waiting perhaps night after night until a lodger came who could take the blame. Well, who blamed him, I'm asking you?"

There was no answer.

"Fifth," continued the police official, "when Amos Juvenal got cracked on the head, where was every one of the family and servants? Maid locked up at headquarters, Jacques out in a hotel on Ferdinand Street, cook and butler running for cover, you and Donnelly here knocked down, Amos killed. There's another job that would take two persons—the murderer and an accomplice. One of those servants was the accomplice, but who was the master

mind? Who haven't we accounted for? Maybe you know, Donnelly?"

THE detective grinned. "Me! I don't know nothin' about what happened out there. I was *non compos hors de combat*. I didn't see nothin' an' I didn't account for nobody."

"Very well," said his superior. "Maybe you'll get the answer if I ask a few plainer questions: All these fake clues, now, like the letter found in your bed, Mr. Boyean, and the poison found in Amos Juvenal's room—well, who could have put them there? The cook? No, she never goes up in the front rooms, they say. Well, who does? Somebody who lives in this house; somebody who has access to every room; somebody who has keys—not only to the rooms, but to Amos's writing desk."

The chief was talking rapidly now.

"Yes, and somebody who knows about that trapdoor in one wall of the murder room, and the hole in the other wall. Amos knew. But he don't count any more. The servants didn't know—at least, they didn't know about the trapdoor, because it's a secret which I understand has been guarded in this house for generations, particularly against the blacks.

"And I got a couple more good questions," the speaker went on enthusiastically. "The butler and cook pull off a *bamboulà* dance invoking their spirits. And this, somebody figured, would get the butler and cook in bad with us all. That voodoo stuff drives everybody crazy. There's cases in this city where Negroes have flopped in a fit when they listen to it. And it works over a white man the same way. It gets us all crazy to jump at each other's throats—or else yell and go wild. Well,

who started that? The butler? Yes, but who asked him to start it? Plantation songs! Blooey! That's a new way to make us crazy."

The chief pointed to the last finger on his left hand. "Eighth and last. Did a man or a woman commit these murders? Which sex fights by using their finger nails? Do men or women scratch when they run amuck? That one point should have given us the right steer from the very first."

Donnelly had sat down and lit a fresh cigar. He was complacently puffing clouds of smoke up to the ceiling, and studying the effect with a grim and satisfied smile.

Boyeau was pacing the room, his slender brown hands clutched behind his back, his thin brows knitted, his eyes staring at the mats, as if he were trying to fathom their intricate designs like a chess player poring over an imminent checkmate.

One of the detectives knocked at the door and was admitted. He walked to the table and laid down a pair of rubber gloves under the full glare of the light. They appeared to be old and ragged, for the finger tips had worn away.

"There you are, chief," he said triumphantly. "Found them tucked away in a clothes press. Weren't there yesterday. They been carefully hidden there to-night—since the murder."

"What clothes press?" the chief asked.

"In the girl's room. They were stuffed into a silk stocking which was folded and stuck under a lot of neatly packed lingerie."

The chief was examining the gloves, holding them up close to the light. "These holes are big enough for finger-nails to stick through," he said, as if to himself, "and at the same time the

pads of the fingers which would leave prints, would be safely covered and escape detection."

He looked at the three men. "I think we have solved this case, gentlemen." He took out his watch and heaved an enormous sigh of relief. Evidently he was already estimating the amount of sleep he had lost. "Quarter past four."

"More than an hour until morning," Boyeau remarked significantly.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HAND OF DEATH.

ONE point in the investigation which had nettled the chief, the Bertillon expert, Donnelly and all the rest, was the imprint of a dead man's hand upon Lucien's throat, that is to say, the hand of Bouche.

The horrifying discovery had confounded every one connected with the case. It pointed directly to the butler's voodooistic activities. The bizarre interpretation was accepted not only by the ignorant maid Zozo and the cook, but to a certain degree by Basil himself.

At that time, Basil had been firmly convinced that some strange transformation had taken place within him. In his disordered mental state, he fancied that he himself was Bouche. The "miracle"—for it could be regarded as little else—extended even so far as to make him a counterpart of Bouche not only in mind, but in body.

But when Basil's own finger-prints were indicated on Lucien's throat, the miracle seemed somewhat complicated by the facts of the case. And as Basil began to shake off the obsession which had gripped him, he saw the whole hideous affair in a clearer light. Some

one had played a fiendish trick. That was the only possible answer.

The hard-headed agents of the homicide bureau never for one moment took any stock in the voodooistic theory of those claw marks.

"This afternoon I had a talk with the district attorney and Donnelly about Bouche's finger-prints," the chief said to Boyean. "And we're pretty sure that a criminal with a diabolical twist to his nature—or her nature—is at the bottom of this whole series of crimes. And going on that basis, I sent a man to Potter's Field to have a look at Bouche's oven."

The term "oven" applies to those narrow vaults above ground in which the dead are entombed—the universal method of burial since the days when New Orleans was called the "Wet Grave."

Boyeau was aghast at the chief's announcement. "Can it be possible," he exclaimed, "that with such a thought in your mind, you can still suspect a woman of these atrocities? If you can imagine such an enormity as the violation of Bouche's grave, then all I must say is that you are not on the trail of a delicate and emotional young girl. You're dealing with the horrors and chicaneries of a voodoo fanatic."

"All right! Let's find the voodoo fanatic," the chief retorted. "In my opinion, that lead don't eliminate the girl. She's apt to believe in all this hocus-pocus as much as the blacks. Maybe more. When voodooism starts bubbling in some one's brain, it works havoc in the whites worse than in blacks. Take it from me! Look at the police annals of this old town, there's the evidence."

"Do you mind if I have a talk with the girl?" Boyean asked.

"Not at all. If you can get any-

thing out of her, you'll have my sincere admiration and respect from now on."

They were about to send for Ninon when Jacques Juvenal appeared at the door. Behind him there was a patrolman holding the giant Negress, Gumbo Lou, by the arm.

"This old dame's been carryin' on somethin' terrible, chief," the patrolman announced. "She's been beggin' us to let her get out of her room—bein' it's next to the butler's—an' she says the butler is puttin' a sign on her. I told her to shut up, but then Mr. Jack here asked me to let her out."

"It's sheer cruelty—treating this old woman like that, *m'sieu'*," Jacques said. "It's like locking a frightened child in a dark closet."

THE patrolman shoved the massive shapeless figure into the room.

Gumbo Lou had clothed herself once more in the more civilized, if less artistic Mother Hubbard. A kerchief of Indienne was folded across her bosom. She presented an expansive broadside of soiled guinea-blue cotton touched up by a single ornament—the silver amulet.

Her enormous lips were still flecked with saliva, her shallow nostrils sniffed and snorted like a horse that smells a dreaded enemy windward. She was three hundred pounds of trembling and shuddering flesh.

"If it wasn't for this here charm, I'd of been hoodooed long ago," she whimpered. "Ædipe's been callin' at me through the wall. Says he'll use a razor on me if his *gris gris* won't work."

"I thought you and he were pards," the chief said. "Weren't you dancing a *bamboulà* with him just a little while ago?"

"Sure. But that wasn't anythin'

wrong, M'sieu' Shareef!" the old woman cried quickly. "I always dance when he plays. Can't help it. He drums thataway so's your muscles start a twitchin'. Air gets to feel like hurricane weather. Just a little fun, m'sieu'."

"But what's he going to kill you for?"

"He thinks I told on him."

"Oh, that's the trouble!" All the men exchanged glances. And the chief went on resolutely. "Well, just why didn't you tell? You want to be hanged for keeping a secret from us?"

"Hang? Who? Me? What-all you mean, m'sieu'? I ain't goin' to keep nothin' from you. I'll help!"

"Well, what is it about this butler that he thinks you've told?"

"I ain't told nothin'!" she cried, raising her heavy bass voice to a piti-ful wail.

"All right then," the chief said to the patrolman. "Take her back to her room."

"Wait please, m'sieu'," Jacques pleaded. "You can't imagine the torture—these servants are like little children."

"She talks or goes back to her room," the chief snapped.

"No, no, not there!" the woman gasped. Her black face was shining with perspiration, her massive lips trembled like two big blobs of currant jelly. "If I go back with nothin' but that wall between us, he'll put a sign on me, m'sieu'! Don't send me there! Let me stay in the light. Let me stay with the lil ma'm'selle. I'll tell you everythin' I know. But don't send me back in that dark room."

"All right. We're listening. Tell us."

She clutched her Mother Hubbard with two enormous fists. Next she

toyed with the silver amulet, casting fearful glances over one mountainous shoulder toward the door and the patio. Then she turned and her lips parted, closed again. Another attempt to master those trembling masses of flesh, and she spoke:

"C dipe he's a *papaloi*. He holds them meetin's over to Congo Square. They all know what he can do over there. They're all afraid of him. The maid won't dast go within fifty feet of him. And Ma'm'selle Ninon—she's afraid. She wouldn't dast tell what I'm tellin' you gem'n. At Congo Square the night Lucien was killed he was holdin' a meetin'. They was dancin' the *calinda*, an' C dipe was wearin' his *bram-bram sonettes* an' they was all sousin' down *tafia*. C dipe he was sayin' his charms ag'in' Lucien—tellin' the black powers to 'witch him an' rot him an' carry him away! He tol' me all this hisself. He's been drinkin' to-night. Better stay out'n his way, gem'n. No use tryin' to shoot him. He's got a *gris gris* made of bristles from a ol' pig which wards off bullets. No use. He's got you all. He'll get me, if you don' have mercy on me, gem'n, an' let me go away from here."

THE chief sat with his thumbs in his vest, his cigar cocked at an angle, puffing vehemently. Evidently he was not entirely satisfied with the extent of these disclosures.

What Gumbo Lou said about the butler was already common knowledge. Even that point about his mystic machinations against Lucien had been surmised by the detective who had been working on the Congo Square angle of the case.

"We aren't interested so much in the butler and his activities," the chief said finally. "What we want to know

is just what your mistress, Mlle. Ninon, has to do with this business."

"*Ma'm'selle?*" The small pig-like eyes widened. "Why, she ain't got anythin' to do with this business, *m'sieu'*. She's jus' a lil chile. I brought her up like my own gal. I nursed her. She called me mammy. What you-all mean, *messieurs?*"

Boyeau interposed before the chief had a chance to go on with this phase of the inquiry. He knew perfectly well that the chief of police could get nothing out of any of the servants concerning the private affairs of the family.

"If I might suggest, *m'sieu'*," he said, "I think we are on the wrong track. If you let this woman stay here 'in the light' as she says, and permit me to question her while her mistress is present, we might get better results."

"Capital idea," Jacques put in.

The chief puffed a moment, as he turned this suggestion over in his mind. Again he realized that the delicacy of the situation demanded a man of Basil's qualifications.

"I'll turn 'em both over to you, Mr. Boyeau," he conceded. "These Creole servants and their Creole masters are beyond me."

The chief then ordered a patrolman to watch the door so that the Negress could not slip out.

"We'll send the *ma'm'selle* to you, Mr. Boyeau," he said. "Meanwhile, Donnelly and I will have another look at Amos's body. I want to see just what kind of wound finished him." He turned to Jacques. "Will you come with us, sir?"

Jacques put up his hand in a gesture of repugnance. "I've already seen the body, *m'sieu'*. I think I can be of more help in following another angle of the investigation. I want to glance over

some of my uncle's correspondence to see if something might not by chance be brought to light."

"A good idea," the chief said, whereat they all left, except Basil and Gumbo Lou.

When Basil found himself closeted in the room alone with the Negress, he motioned her to a chair, indicating one a good distance from the patio door. There was a damask curtain hanging in front of a second door—the one which led into the vestibule. But this door evidently was rarely used, for, as Basil ascertained, it was locked.

"Sit down over there by that curtain," he ordered, "and do not interrupt me when I am talking to your mistress."

"I won't interrupt nothin'. I've said enough. I ain't goin' to say another word except just this: You gem'n ain't seen nothin' yet to what you's gwine to see. *Ædipe* he plays tricks—that six-toed debbil! You don't know half of it. Before to-night's over you're goin' to have an eyeful, let me warn you that much, *m'sieu'*. You're quality, you are—an' I want fo' to save you fum what you's gwine to see!"

Her deep bass voice had an almost oracular sound. Basil had a peculiar conviction that there was something in her prophecy that was not to be too quickly ignored.

Another dreadful horror was hovering over that ill-fated house!

In his impressionable nervous state, Basil felt it. He looked at his watch, as if eager for the morning light to come. It was not yet five. And the bridge that spanned that darkest hour, which was the hour before dawn, was to bring a series of events more horrifying than Gumbo Lou, for all her superstitious fears, had ever dreamed.

Basil was about to start in with his cross-questioning of the giant Negress when a patrolman knocked at the door.

"Where's the chief at?" he asked.

"Just left to take another look at the corpse."

"Speakin' of corpses, I got some news for him—an' for you-all. The chief sent a man to Potter's Field this afternoon to have a look at Bouche's remains. When he got back the chief had left headquarters for the night—so the report was left on his desk. The report said Bouche's body had been examined an' one hand was missin'. It had been amputated at the wrist!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A GRISLY DISCOVERY.

BASIL BOYEAN did not start in upon his interview of the Negress, Gumbo Lou, as he had intended. Instead, he paced the room for a few moments, his head bowed, his brows knitted fiercely.

He heard a groan issue from the massive chest of the African woman, and, with some acerbity, he snapped at her to be quiet. An impatient glance in her direction revealed merely a splotch of color where her Madras *tignon* caught the edge of the circle of lamplight. Her face was merged completely in the black background of shadows.

Thereupon Basil stepped to the other side of the room, where an arched door led into the small alcove used as a telephone booth. For a few moments he was closeted there, speaking in low tones, so that the cook could not hear him. When he came out, Mlle. Ninon, summoned by Donnelly, had entered the room.

A change had come over the girl

since Basil had seen her in her last interview with the chief. She seemed to be wrecked by the same fear-sway which had enslaved the two colored women of the household—the prey of an intangible dread which she either did not understand or did not dare to express in words.

Basil wished above all to gain her confidence—to put her at ease. To a certain degree he succeeded.

"Just what are you afraid of, *mademoiselle*?" he asked gently.

She sank into a chair, her hands clasped. "Something I cannot say. Something too horrible."

"I want to help you," Basil said. "I know beyond any shadow of doubt that you play a guiltless rôle in this terrible tragedy. The police—fools that they are—believe you have connived in these affairs. And I want to prove to them—"

"How can they believe such a hideous thing, *m'sieu*?" she asked, her eyes widening like those of an injured child.

"Here is a list—certain points which the chief of police has jotted down. If they are cleared up, the trail toward the real murderer will be more easily followed. May I read you the list?"

She did not answer. Instead, she shrugged her slim shoulders, uttered a gasp of impatience, and sat down. He read the list:

First: How did Ninon happen to be locked up in the cook's room when her father was murdered a few feet from the door?

Second: Why did she say her father was reading when he was with her in her room just before the murder? This we have proved to be a lie, for the room was dark—as attested by Mr. Boyean, who could see the patio windows, and by Officer Murphy, who

could see the windows which opened upon the street.

Third: Why did she do away with the message written by her father?

Fourth: How did the rubber gloves with the cut finger-tips—obviously the gloves used in the crime—happen to be hidden away in a silk stocking in her boudoir?

THE girl sprang to her feet. "It is the work of a fiend, *m'sieu'*!

How do I know why those gloves were there? Would I have hidden them there, even if it were I who had used them? Me, would I be such a dunce?"

"No, I dare say you are an intelligent enough young lady to dispose of them in a more circumspect manner."

"*Merci, m'sieu'*! You are right."

"As, for instance, you disposed of the letter which your father wrote."

"That letter, ah! It is a different matter. *Régardez!* I was in the room while he wrote. It was dark. I knew he was writing something of great import. *Bien!* When he slipped out of the room, I reached for the letter. By the dim light of the arc light of the street I could see the paper there. It was left there in the open, *m'sieu'*, to be found by these fools of the *Sûreté*. My father, you observe, did not care if it was found in my room. He was afraid to be known as the writer of it. He wrote it in the dark—his fear was so great."

Her breast heaved with emotion.

"So he left the letter on my writing table. Very well. I picked it up. Then he was killed. I believe he was killed for having written those words, and I became ridden with fear. I read the contents by holding it to the dim arc light. I hastened down to the servants' quarters to show the contents to Gumbo Lou."

Ninon nodded her head in the direc-

tion of the silent black sphinx on the other side of the room, and immediately continued:

"She is my only *confidante* in this house, *m'sieu'*. She is like a mother to me. Well, then, I find myself in her room downstairs—and the murder of my father takes place almost outside the door. I become terrified. 'He wrote this message and is murdered. I will be next,' I say to myself. I tear the letter to bits, and roll the bits into pills and throw them into the lot outside the cook's window. *Voilà!* Must I say more?"

"I believe that answers all the questions," Basil said.

But in glancing over the list the young man noted that Ninon had not explained why she had told the investigators that Amos Juvenal had been reading. This question, however, did not trouble Basil. In the light of her other disclosures it was easily understood.

Ninon had been gripped with a vital horror of that message—for it had seemingly resulted in Amos's immediate death. The message was accursed. When the girl was questioned, she did not dare confess that Amos had been writing that letter. She spoke the first evasive lie that came to her lips. The fact that he was writing suggested the lie to her: "He was reading."

Thus, terrified beyond words at the omniscient horror that was hanging over her, ready to pounce upon her, she washed her hands of the accursed message.

Basil cleared his throat and in a gentle, tactful voice broached the next angle of his investigation.

"I shall do everything in my power, *mademoiselle*, to clear you of this nonsensical suspicion harbored by the police. I only ask that in return you help

me by answering one or two questions of a more personal character."

She turned her wide, pained eyes up to him. The fear and suspicion were softened slightly. "What is it you wish to ask me, *m'sieu'*?"

"I have chanced to learn that there was something inimical in your relations with your cousin, Lucien Juvenal."

A FLAME of anger came to her cheeks. Unquestionably she resented this intrusion into her private affairs. Nevertheless, to Basil's utter surprise, she answered his question. The answer came as if in an outburst of thoughtless anger:

"Look here! You think I killed him! Well, I could have killed him easily enough! Father tried to force me to marry that beast! Lucien came to me, took me in his arms—and when I refused him, that precious cousin tried to force his attentions upon me. That scoundrel! I spat on him. I could have killed him!"

She stopped, her chest heaving, her breath coming in choking gasps between parted colorless lips. Then she seemed to break.

Intuitively expecting some reaction upon the Negress sitting in the shadows, Basil glanced across the room. Gumbo Lou was sitting motionless, silent—like some huge animal crouching and biding its time.

"I was horrified enough, *m'sieu'*," the girl went on, "when Lucien was found dead! *Ma foi!* I thought that I myself had wished his death—and that my wish had killed him. It is the way things go in this domicile, *m'sieu'*. What we think in our minds is more real than what happens. We are living in a little corner of hell—that is this domicile. We fight and we hate,

and we kill. If the *bon Dieu* would only grant that I could escape!"

"You will not be kept in here another night, *mademoiselle*, rest assured of that," Basil said gently.

He then turned to the Negress. There was still the wide expanse of black shadows, and the high point of light made by her *tignon*. Her head seemed to have sunk forward. She was slumped in her chair as if the examination of her mistress and the previous nerve racking events had been too much for her.

"Perhaps your cook will vouchsafe some information," Basil said to Ninon. "If the servants persist in hiding from us what has gone on in the house before this orgy of murder, we cannot hope to solve the mystery."

"You have heard what the *m'sieu'* says, Gumbo Lou," Ninon began in a soft voice. "Do not be afraid to answer his questions. I am here."

The Negress did not look up. She remained inscrutable and silent like an ebony Buddha. Before her mistress attempted to elicit some response from her, Donnelly appeared at the door.

"Hey, Mr. Boyean!" he said excitedly. "We're in a nice jam now! That butler, Eddy—" Eddy was the nearest the detective could come to the name *Œdipe*—"well, he's got out of his cell. Ain't there any more. Vanished. What kind of a Houdini are we dealin' with, anyway, I'd like to know?"

"If he'd got out, how is it no one saw him in the patio?" Basil asked.

"Too many trees—that's the answer. He could of snuck into the house somewheres through them banana trees an' palms without Officer Murphy or his side-kick seeing him. But, as a matter of fact, Murphy did see him crossin' the flagstones an' stop-

pin' at the old cannon a minute. Could tell by his white jacket. He thought it was one of us in our shirt sleeves. But now he says maybe it was the butler. So we looked in the butler's room an' he ain't there."

"**W**HAT was he doing at the cannon?" Basil inquired.

"He was doin' plenty. Of course, I headed straight for that cannon when the patrolman told me about it. An' I found a bunch of the ol' witch doctor's effects—a stuffed moccasin, an' a couple bottles of snake oil, bits of lava, an'—somethin' else—I hope it won't make these here women folk faint when I mention it."

Ninon's face was already ashen. The Negress seemed to be waiting, every muscle taut.

"You've found the hand!" Basil exclaimed.

Donnelly nodded. "Wrapped up in a piece of cloth. Bright yellow because of the stuff they use on remains before wallin' same up in an oven."

"What 'd the chief say to that?" Basil wanted to know.

"Just what I've thought all along. There's a voodoo fanatic at the bottom of this—an' this here stunt with the hand is just another one of his tricks. The butler stuck it in there behind a swallow's nest. An' now the only question is—where's this bloodthirsty ol' voodoo priest at?"

Both men turned and stared into the dim recesses of the room where the Negress was sitting.

"Perhaps you can tell us somethin' about this?" Donnelly said, assuming his customary bullying tone.

Gumbo Lou did not deign to answer. She seemed to have been stricken with paralysis at the news of the discovery. But as Boyean looked at her

a peculiar qualm gripped him. The ever-present horror that pervaded the house seemed once more to form itself in that single ugly word—voodooism!

Boyeau had heard that in certain primitive religions of the Orient and Africa, men were able to detach themselves from their corporeal bodies and visit distant places. Boyean had once read the account of an explorer finding one of these men on the roadside near a village. He had lain there so long, in death-like immobility, that two little birds had nested in his tangled hair.

For some reason or other this picture came up in his mind now. He had the feeling that Gumbo Lou was not in the room. She had gone away, leaving that mass of black, shapeless flesh behind her.

"You hear me, ol' woman!" Donnelly was rasping. "Why don't you answer? What you doin' slumped down thataway? Pinch yourself an' come to life."

Boyeau glanced back at Ninon. Her mouth was gaping. Her exquisitely sculptured face was transfixed with horror. With a sudden realization of the truth, Boyean whirled about and rushed over to the Negress slumped in the chair in the dark recess.

Gumbo Lou had been dead for some time!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAN-HUNT.

"**I**T'S easy enough to figure how it was done, chief," Donnelly said when the chief inspector was summoned. "Some one unlocked that door leading to the vestibule, an' reached through the curtain."

"But she has not been left here alone," Basil objected. "I have been in here myself, ever since you gentlemen left. That is to say, I was here except for a few moments during which I was at the telephone." He pointed to the alcove on the opposite end of the long room. "How she could have been killed without my knowing, or hearing the sounds of a struggle, I cannot imagine."

"You didn't hear anything — maybe, while you were in there telephoning?"

"No. Not then," Basil said thoughtfully. "But, as a matter of fact, I recollect now she gasped and slumped forward when I was in here. I thought she was merely nursing her fears. I told her to keep quiet, and then I went in there to telephone."

"It's clear enough to my mind," Donnelly commented. "The bird that murdered her thrust this thing into her back up to the hilt." He held up a long, slender dagger. "It went through her heart. Naturally Mr. Boyean didn't hear anything. She kicked off without a sound. The electric chair couldn't of done it neater."

"Let's have a look at that," the chief said.

He examined the weapon for some time, making a clucking sound with his tongue. Finally he shook his head. "What do you make of this antique, Mr. Boyean?"

Basil examined it carefully. He had a collection of weapons and armor in his St. Charles Avenue home, and was somewhat of a connoisseur in such things.

"The handle is rudely carved," he said. "And the symbols suggest some of the northern tribes of Africa. This line of conventionalized skulls symbolizes a chieftain's ownership. I am in-

clined to think it might have belonged to one of these African chiefs—ancestors of some of our *bossals*, I mean our slaves that were born in Africa. The *apaches* of Paris and Marseilles use this type of weapon. They call it a *lingue*."

The chief nodded, setting his lips grimly. And Donnelly added: "Just what I thought!"

"All right, Donnelly. Get the boys to lay her down on that couch and put a sheet over her. Tell Morton to get any finger-prints he can on the handle of this thing—likewise the draperies over that door—and the door handle itself. Then telephone to Doc Josef to come over here again."

"Yeah, an' I'll tell him to come prepared to stay a while," Donnelly said. "We might as well turn this house into a morgue an' keep an autopsy surgeon here regular, the way things are happening."

The chief turned his back and walked toward the door. Suddenly he stopped. "Where's that girl gone?" he asked.

All the men in the room stared dumfounded. Ninon had slipped out during the excitement.

Boyeau was the first to speak, his calm but metallic voice breaking the tense silence. "We need worry no longer about Mlle. Ninon. I have just talked with her, and I know beyond any shadow of doubt that she is innocent."

"Course she's innocent," the chief roared. "We know who the criminal is—but if everybody starts disappearing, where we going to end up?"

He dispatched two men to search the house for the girl—and to aid in the search which was already going on for the vanished *Œdipe*. "And somebody go tell Jacques Juvenal that an-

other member of this precious household has been bumped off."

"If you don't mind," Boyean interposed, "I'll go upstairs and tell Jacques myself. He went up to examine some of his uncle's old letters. I'm rather anxious to hear the result. There are many angles of this affair which I cannot fathom. And I rather think the only possible light we can have from now on will be found in the past history of Amos Juvenal and his brother."

Accordingly, Boyean went upstairs to Uncle Amos's room. He found Jacques sitting at a table, his fists pressed against his temples, his head swathed in a wet towel. He was deeply engrossed in a packet of weather-stained old letters—so engrossed, in fact, that he did not look up when the other entered.

"The cook has been murdered. M'sieu' Jacques," Boyean announced calmly. "A knife has been thrust in her back."

It was then that Jacques turned around—slowly, mechanically, as if in a daze. "*Mon Dieu!*" he gasped. "When will these horrors end?"

Boyeau described in a few words just what had happened since he, Jacques, had come upstairs. Jacques jumped immediately to the conclusion at which the chief and his men had arrived. "There's no more doubt," he said.

"None," Boyean admitted. Then asked, "You have found nothing relevant in those letters?"

"Gumbo Lou dead!" he murmured. Then: "The letters? Yes, yes. I'll have something to disclose shortly." He rubbed his forehead as if trying to shake off a smothering pain. "I shan't go downstairs, *m'sieu'*. Gumbo

Lou—let them attend to the old woman. Dead—you are sure about that?"

Basil nodded, and Jacques went on: "I shall stay here until morning. I shan't go down again—not until the sun is up."

"A very good idea," Boyean said seriously.

"The butler is doubtless hiding in some clothes press or chest. He is a large man, but he can secrete himself. There are many places in this house, they say. I have no doubt but that he is still here. He can not get out."

"We'll find him."

"And when you do, kindly let me know on the instant, *m'sieu'*. Meanwhile, I shall stay in here with the doors locked."

Boyeau commended this precaution, and then, promising to report as soon as anything new turned up, went downstairs again.

He found the chief in the parlor talking to a newcomer—a wizened, white-haired, old Negro, who appeared to be frightened out of his wits.

"This is one of the darkies we roused out of a shack near the levee," the chief explained. "I sent a half dozen men over there under Sergeant Leahy to find out just what that singing and caterwauling was about. Well, they took a good long time finding out anything, I'll say that much for them."

Boyeau noticed a police officer standing by the Negro's side.

"You see, Mr. Boyean," Sergeant Leahy explained apologetically, "the rumpus stopped as soon as me and my men started over there. They could see us, of course. And once the noise stopped it was like hunting for a needle in a stack trying to find any trace of these coons over in them warehouses. But here's one of 'em. We nabbed

him trying to sneak out. 'And he confessed."

"**W**HAT'S he confessed?" Boyean asked.

"Says they were congregating on the orders of their *papaloi*," the chief replied. "Is that right—you?"

The shrinking, whimpering, old fellow nodded his head. His black gnarled hands fumbled shakingly with a ragged hat.

"Yassuh, Massa Chief," he said. "I'm tellin' you everythin' so's you don't hitch me up with that yaller debbil. He's got every cullud man in N'Awleens scairt stiff of him, suh. Them meetin's of his—he's killed a man with that conjurin'. Friend of mine jus' flop down an' turn up his toes. And a couple years ago he kill' a woman the same way. A Mozambique lady."

"If he's such an unpleasant celebrity, how'd you happen to be part of this voodoo shindig last night?"

"Me part of it? I didn't know what we was doin', suh. Ædipe said he was gwine heal my sister of her sickness. Nominated me an' some other colored gem'n for to sing a litany over yonder while he was playin' the drums an' makin' 'cantations. One of the ole gem'n with us, he said Ædipe weren't healin' nobody of nothin'. He was puttin' a sign on this house an' its clients, suh, tha's what he was doin'. Hoodoo'in' them all—spiritin' 'em off into utter dahkness. I shorely—"

"All right," the chief cut in briskly. "We haven't time to listen to any more of your apologies. What you said is along the lines of what we already know. Have him locked up, Donnelly. Not in this house, though. We've got enough voodoo parsons in this joint. Send him to headquarters. I'm going

to start an inquiry into all this voodoo stuff after we've disposed of this case. Right now we've got to find the butler!"

Almost immediately after the old Negro had been led away, one of the detectives who had been assigned on the search, reported in the parlor.

"We're gettin' some results, chief," he said. "We've fine-combed the whole house—every closet an' alcove an' clothes press. Found the girl out there in the patio kneeling in front of that shrine like she was prayin'—an' just waitin' for the end to come. An' besides that, we've got the message Amos Juvenal was writin' before he was bumped off."

"But the butler—"

"Not a trace of him to be found anywheres."

"And yet you say you're getting results!" the chief snapped. Then, with a grunt of disgust, he added, "Let's see the message."

"We found a piece of it on the gallery. The girl must have picked it up when Amos went down into the patio, an' then she started tearin' it as she ran down after him. When she ducked into the cook's room after the murder, why she tore the rest of it up an' rolled it into little bits. Didn't set fire to it. We figure she was too scared to light even a match. The way we found these bits was because we figured it's just what she'd do—unless she swallowed 'em. She'd throw the bits out of the window, of course. And that," the plain-clothes man explained with some pride, "is just where we looked."

THE detective then assisted Donnelly, Boyean and the chief in piecing the little bits together. The writing was scrawled in crooked lines across the paper, several of the

words running over the edge. It had obviously been written in the dark.

And the reason for its being written so hastily—and in the dark—was also apparent when they read the words. Amos Juvenal evidently sensed the fact that an arch-fiend was at work, roaming the house and watching every act of the doomed Juvenal family.

Perhaps Amos had made an awkward attempt there in the darkness to disguise his hand, intending to leave it on Ninon's table where it would be found by one of the investigators.

Evidently he cared little whether Ninon were blamed for the writing. Once more he was using that ill-starred girl for his own convenience.

The Juvenals are being killed one by one by a desperate criminal—an *apache* from Marseilles who was the lover of Bertram's wife. Bertram was instrumental in bringing him to justice. He escaped from Guiana three years ago and has come for his revenge. He has had access to the house through the secret passage to the river which leads from the green door in the patio.

The chief sprang to his feet and dashed toward the door.

"Come on, men," he cried. "The green door—that's how the butler got out! If we hurry, we may get him."

Out in the patio he was joined by two more detectives and the whole group hurried to a barred door in the eastern wall. Before entering, the chief had presence of mind enough to pause and snap out an order.

"Get Sergeant Leahy to go down to the river and search the levee for the opening of the tunnel. Also telephone to the harbor squad to man a tug and stand by in the stream."

Donnelly produced the key to the old door which led into a cell-like storeroom.

For a good quarter of an hour the men, sweeping their flash lights over the bare stone walls and floor of the room, searched for some sign of secret passage.

Finally the chief let out an oath. "It's another false clew!" he grunted in disgust. "It's my opinion Amos didn't write that message at all. And if he did, just why did the girl try so desperately to dispose of it—maybe some of you gumshoe experts can tell me that! Take it from me, we'll have to tear this whole house down before we find the butler, or any secret passage he might have used. The house is chock full of 'em, and I ain't going to waste any more of my time. I'm not a stone mason."

He left a man to continue the seemingly impossible task of discovering some hole in that cell while, in company with Donnelly, he returned to the parlor to rejoin Boyean.

Boyeau was sitting at a table where the clews thus far assembled were spread out before him: the bits of lava, the pig's hair, amulets, the *apache* knife, the torn pieces of paper which had been Amos Juvenal's "message."

"It beats me!" the chief said in utter discouragement. "We got everything here—enough clews to convict everybody in the house—the only thing that's missing is the criminal himself."

"At least, that message from Amos explains how the criminal got out," Donnelly remarked, throwing away a half masticated cigar stub.

"YES," Boyean said quietly. "And it also satisfies me beyond any further doubt that I have the answer to the mystery."

The chief who had started pacing up and down the room, fuming and

swearing, paused. "What you mean by that, Mr. Boyean?"

The latter leaned back in his chair and lighted a fresh cheroot. For the first time since the previous morning, Donnelly noticed that his slender olive-skinned hand did not tremble.

"I mean just this," Basil began. "I promised you that I would deliver the criminal before morning. It's but a few moments now before sunrise. And I shall keep my promise."

The chief scowled at him, suspicion and disbelief clearly written on his florid face.

"Look here, Mr. Boyean. You been acting kind of mysteriously to-night. Mind you, I ain't for one moment thought you were mixed up in this business. I've made that clear to you, I hope? Yes? Well, then, let me tell you how much faith I got in you: You were next to Lucien's room when he was murdered. You were outside Jacques's room when he came near getting his. You were tusslin' with some one when Amos Juvenal got brained. You were alone in the room with that Negress when she got bumped off with a dagger. And now you say you'll surrender the criminal. Damned if I haven't got a peculiar hunch that you're going to come to me with a smile on your face and say, 'Look here, Monsieur Inspector, I did it!'"

An enigmatic smile was at that moment flickering upon Boyean's lips. "As a matter of fact, I was on the point of enacting that very rôle several times since yesterday morning," he confessed.

It was the first time he had dared to make such an admission. And now he made it with the absolute confidence that he had found the criminal.

"I have been so much entangled

with this mystery that I half believed I was either guilty or going mad. Events have shown clearly that I was very definitely on the verge of the latter disaster. My brain has been playing tricks with me ever since the onslaught of my usual anniversary of the three-day chills. I have been dreaming dreams—the nonsensical dreams of a man who has been running a high temperature."

Basil smiled reassuringly as he went on: "But I am quite well now, M'sieu' Inspector; I am not guilty. I have been personally present on the scene of all these crimes, not through any fantastic quip of coincidence, but because I have been used as a dupe. The murderer has taken every precaution to perform his hideous deeds while I myself was on the stage—as a decoy for you gentlemen of the police—"

His recital was cut short by a frantic scream which pierced the dead silence of the patio. It was as if that festering garden of tropical plants had given forth one last desperate utterance, as the horror—biding its time to wipe out the remnant of the Juvenal family—descended upon it.

All three men, Boyean, the chief and Donnelly, rushed for the door. When they herded out in a mad scramble and found themselves in the dim shadows of the court, they paused for a single moment, trying to ascertain whence that scream had come.

"It was the girl," Donnelly said under his breath.

"Yes, Ninon," Basil said. "There's no doubt. She is the next one to go!"

A BURLY figure came charging in from the *porte-cochère*, bumping up sharply against Donnelly. The squat little detective was knocked against the wall, where he supported

himself, choking for breath. It was Murphy, the patrolman stationed at the front of the house, who had run into him.

"I seen her," Murphy cried breathlessly. "She was bein' dragged through that clump of trees. Come on, chief! It was the butler. I seen him draggin' her into the storeroom!"

All four men dashed across the flower beds, tore through the thicket of magnolia, the ferns, the clump of banana trees. As they reached the back of the patio, there was a muffled shot from somewhere behind the thick adobe wall.

Another shot answered—just as muffled, and then came the duller sound of something falling, followed immediately by the clatter of bricks thrown upon the floor.

The chief realized in a flash that he had left one of the detectives in the storeroom with orders to make a further examination of its construction. That detective or the abductor of Ninon had fallen in the combat. Perhaps both had been killed.

The four men reached the door almost simultaneously. And they found it locked.

One of them picked up a stone olla from the side of the flagstone walk. The door of the storeroom was stout, its bolts and hinges and bars forged in the government workshops by African

slaves. But after repeated onslaughts, the age-worn wood crashed in.

Three flash lights focused upon the floor of the room. As the chief had anticipated, his own man was lying there—fallen with a bullet wound.

"He got away, chief," the man groaned. "I fired—but he held the woman in front of him, and shot at me under her arm. The damned coon plugged me here in the shoulder. Hurry—you'll get him!" He pointed to a gaping hole in the floor.

Near this hole was a slab of adobe and bricks held together by mortar. It had been pried up from the floor where it had fitted over the well-like aperture as neatly as the cover of a trapdoor spider's nest. From the black hole came the dank foul odor of Mississippi mud.

"Come on, men!" the chief cried in a frenzy of excitement.

There was no triumph to his voice. He visualized the Negro, Œdipe, abducting a Creole girl—and this evoked further visions of horror, of lynchings, of race war.

"Come on! Murphy, you stay here and take care of this man. The rest follow me!"

He dropped into the jet blackness of the gaping hole in the floor. Boyear went next. And finally the squat ungainly figure of Donnelly slipped out of sight.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.





Shaw was surreptitiously at work on the plate which was to make them rich

Second Growth

Calvin Shaw was the cleverest of counterfeiters; and the time came when he thought he could counterfeit a crime

By CARL CLAUSEN

CALVIN SHAW had his own reasons for seeking solitude; and in Little Lake he thought he had found all of that. That village of Humboldt County, California, lies in the crook of one of the many elbows formed by the two ranges of low hills between which Wild River winds its tortuous course to the sea. Thirty years ago the town was in the heart of the redwood country and giant sequoias grew in every back yard. To-day the nearest standing timber is over twenty miles distant.

The two sawmills that gave Little Lake its sustenance have long since moved away. The narrow gauge road of the Wild River Railway Company has abandoned it. The last trains were run over its rusty rails many years ago and the deserted "depot," a low,

rambling affair with gables of the painfully ornate scrollwork so popular a quarter of a century ago, is rapidly falling into decay. Bats and chipmunks have taken possession there. With its boarded-up windows it looks like some ancient horned monster who, blinded, has crawled thither to die.

There are but two structures in the town worthy of the name of buildings—Wetherington's general store, a high-stooped edifice with a clapboarded false front, and the quarters of the Wild River Valley Bank, the only two-story building in the town. The second floor of the bank is divided into offices, now inch-thick with the dust of years.

The country about Little Lake abounds in game of every description; ducks on the river, and quail in the berry thickets. The deforested

areas on the gently sloping hills above the town, where the grass grows flush between the charred redwood stumps, are the favorite grazing places of deer on moonlit nights, and both black bear and cinnamon occasionally wander down these slopes attracted by the honey of the farmers' hives.

Few strangers visit Little Lake, and those who do rarely stay long. There is little to attract them and still less to make them stay. But occasionally, a man who wishes solitude, a writer or an artist, stays for a month or two during the summer season, for there is an air of suspended romance about the town that attracts the seeker after the unusual, and a certain arresting loveliness in the contemplation of the task Nature has set herself in her efforts at clothing the logged and devastated hills with a second growth, which in places has already attained the dignity of trees.

CALVIN SHAW was neither a writer nor an artist, unless a certain skill with an engraver's needle on a copperplate can be called art. His search for solitude was a matter of expediency, not temperament. In New York and other large Eastern cities there are certain plain-clothes individuals who would have given a great deal to discover his whereabouts, and to be able to lay their hands upon a certain copperplate, engraved without the sanction or supervision of the United States Treasury Department.

From one of these plates Shaw had struck off some half a million in currency so perfect that only the most expert could tell the bills from the genuine. Having through various "shovers" disposed of these bills at twenty cents on the dollar, he had folded his tents and quietly slipped away.

For two years, now, he had been living in Little Lake under the name Calvin Shaw. His real name does not matter. In his selecting Little Lake as a hiding place, he had shown the good, sound judgment which had enabled him always to keep one jump ahead of the Federal officers.

His life before embarking upon a counterfeiting career had been rather humdrum and unexciting. He had been employed by a large engraving firm in New York, a concern that made a specialty of printing currency for the smaller Latin American republics and for the lesser European principalities.

For years on end he had turned out plates from which billions in currency had been struck, living on a salary that a journeyman plumber would have scorned. For years on end he had gone home to a grubby little furnished room in the Bronx, every night, and had taken his vicarious pleasure between dusk and dawn, wondering if he'd ever get out of the rut.

It was on one of his nocturnal ramblings about the chopsuey houses on the Bowery that he had met one Samuel Kantor, otherwise known as Subway Sam because of his habits of preying upon the patrons of the underground lines during the rush hour, when nimble fingers were felt the least. Subway Sam, who had "shoved the queer" in many cities, grew confidential over a glass of beer, when Shaw admitted that he was an engraver, and the dip's small eyes narrowed speculatively as he sized up the other.

Before two weeks had passed Shaw was surreptitiously at work upon a plate which Sam told him enthusiastically would make every one concerned rich. It came near doing so, but also sent Sam and a few others to the penitentiary. Shaw alone escaped.

He destroyed the plate and took Horace Greeley's advice with some forty-five thousand dollars—his share to date in the venture—in his jeans.

With the discretion that had characterized his conduct through the entire transaction he avoided the large cities, and, the summer season being at hand, bought himself some outing togs, a gun and a rod, joining the great army of tired business men who worked so hard for a rest in the mountains of the West during July and August.

His ramblings took him to Little Lake. One look at the town decided him. He rented himself a front room above the Wild River Valley Bank and furnished it modestly. He let it be known that, tired of business and charmed by the quiet little town, he had decided to settle there. If one or two citizens remarked upon his youth at retiring from business—he was not yet thirty-five—the rest were only too ready to welcome an apparently substantial citizen to their midst.

HE opened a modest account in the bank, adding cash to it from time to time until something over forty thousand dollars lay there to his credit. Then he announced that he was in the market for first mortgages at modest interest and upon suitable security.

As the bank put through his loans for him and handled his collections, his standing with them soon grew to respect; and as he always made it a point to carry a substantial cash balance, Ezra Biggs, the president, went out of his way to be friendly.

In a quiet, unassuming manner, Shaw won the confidence and respect of the citizens. After two years now he was growing into the simple life of Little Lake like a well grafted sprig

bearing new fruit by the vigorous sap of the old tree. His modest capital helped the town, his not too exacting security requirements made him universally liked.

It was quite natural that in the course of events, he should be elected to the board of directors of the bank, also that since he showed certain executive ability and sound business judgment, that he should step into the vice presidency when old Merriam, the incumbent, died. Ezra Biggs's choice was unanimously confirmed by the board, none of whom had the leisure for the duties of vice president.

It had been Merriam's habit to come down on Saturday mornings to help out in the bank, and Shaw professed his willingness to do this without remuneration just as his predecessor had done. In agreeing to this there had been no ulterior motive in his mind. The income from his mortgages was ample for his needs.

The bank employed only one teller, a young man, King Anderson by name, who bore the entirely honorary title of cashier. The rest of the staff were McCready, an elderly bookkeeper who had been with them for thirty years, and Ruth Hardy, a stenographer, the sole support of a widowed mother whose husband had been killed in a logging accident.

Between Ruth Hardy and King Anderson, the cashier, there had been an understanding for several years. They planned to get married sometime in the dim future when Anderson's salary was raised and her own responsibilities had ceased. It was one of those apparently matter-of-fact small town courtships that stretch into years and drift along with both parties more or less satisfied to wait for the high tide of fortune.

Every one took it for granted that they would marry some day. King was attentive to Ruth in his quiet, devoted way. He saw her home every evening from the bank. On Saturday nights he stayed at her house for supper, and on Sunday mornings he called for Ruth and her mother and took them to church. After church he walked home with them, ate dinner at the house, and during the afternoon the two young people went for a walk, the weather permitting, or if it was raining spent the rest of the day indoors, King usually reading to Ruth and her mother, while the two women busied themselves with their sewing.

No one observing the pair would say that King Anderson was an impetuous lover, nor that the girl seemed to demand impetuosity. That she was deeply fond of him, however, she showed in many ways. She mended his clothes, stayed with him at the bank on the rare evenings when he was behind with his work, saw to it that he wore rubbers on rainy days; and selected his suits and hats for him on their twice-yearly excursions to Eureka, the county seat.

IF there had been no ulterior motive in Calvin Shaw's acceptance of the vice presidency of the bank, one soon developed for giving more than the necessary time to the light duties which had fallen to him at old Merriam's death.

He liked to watch Ruth Hardy at her work. The curve of her neck as she bent over typewriter or adding machine interested him. He liked the way her hair lay smooth and black against her white skin, and the trick she had of wrinkling her smooth forehead when a sentence in her shorthand puzzled her; but most of all he liked

to watch her trim ankles arch forward gracefully, as she hooked her heels over the rung of the high stool while she worked.

Shaw was not a ladies' man. He never had been. Beyond certain furtive episodes with women of a sort in New York and other large cities, he had avoided them, principally because he did not trust them. But like Kipling he had learned from Ann and Peg about the rest of the sex, and had profited thereby. When one or two of these episodes had threatened to drift into permanency he had broken them off. Nevertheless, he had a vague, almost wistful longing for the companionship of a certain kind of woman, a being as vague and nebulous in his mind as was the longing.

In Ruth Hardy she suddenly took shape and form. He found himself contemplating her in the rôle of wife and mother—as *his* wife, and as the mother of *his* children. The fact that he was unworthy of her did not occur to him. His past was forgotten, lived down.

In his own eyes he had never been a criminal. Indeed he was not of the sterner stuff of which habitual criminals were made. Through a set of circumstances he had slipped into law breaking and had come off victoriously. The fate of his companions had taught him the folly of continuing in such endeavors. The fact they were old offenders, and their finger-prints and Bertillon data were chalked up against them at headquarters, had been their undoing. No such prints or data existed of him.

He had been careful not to give Subway Sam or his companions his right name, nor the name of the engraving firm that had employed him, and he had changed his place of resi-

dence from the Bronx to the lower East Side immediately on embarking upon his counterfeiting venture and quitting his job. Not even a picture of him existed anywhere. He had carefully destroyed the few snapshots that had been taken of him from time to time by friends. No description of him existed anywhere except such verbal ones as his companions in crime might have given the Federal officers, under duress or to curry favor.

Therefore he did not consider his past in his contemplation of Ruth Hardy. After all, the present held obstacles enough. King Anderson was the most formidable of these. Shaw had read somewhere that the man who had been the first to awaken love in a woman, could have the inside track with her for all time; that no matter how attractive a new arrival might seem, there is ever her memory of love's first awakening to overshadow the stranger; so he knew that to win Ruth he must use strategy.

The fact that he might hurt King Anderson did not enter into consideration. The easy sophistry of the old saw to the effect that everything is fair in love and war, justified any course he might decide upon.

He was not insensible to his own manly attractions. He was not yet thirty-five, tall, well-formed, and good-looking in a florid blond way—just the sort of man that would attract a girl of Ruth's dark type. He dressed well and wore his clothes with an easy metropolitan air.

Measured by Little Lake's standards he was well-to-do, almost rich, as the girl's position at the bank gave her occasion to know. His income from his mortgages and other investments netted him over thirty-five hundred dollars a year, a good deal more than

twice as much as King Anderson's salary, and an almost princely income in a town like Little Lake. This, he knew would bear weight with a sensible and practical girl like Ruth who chose to put off marriage because of the duty she owed her mother.

He felt that he had judged her rightly when he decided that an aggressive lovemaking would repel her, ruin his chances, so he elected to play the fatherly rôle, which because of her own maturity—she was twenty-six—aroused her curiosity and amusement.

HE played his hand cleverly. By simple friendliness and a courteous manner her curiosity and amusement soon turned into respect and confidence. The prestige of his position aided him; so when he began to increase his attention to the affairs of the bank to be near her, she was completely disarmed, particularly as he made it a point to cultivate the friendship of King Anderson as well. Flattered, the younger man accepted his advances unsuspectingly.

It was not long before the three of them became good friends, and in the natural course of events Shaw, being a bachelor, was asked to Sunday dinner at Ruth's house now and then. On such occasions he was careful not to overstay his welcome. He would depart early with a joking remark or two about giving them a chance to be alone—which they never really were, since Ruth's mother was always somewhere about the house. His remarks were calculated to give the girl a hint of his own prowess as a lover, and he noted with satisfaction the faint flow of color that they caused in her cheeks.

Opportunities to show his regard for her were not lacking, but he was careful not to let King Anderson get an

inkling of it. He elected to assume the hopeless rôle, than which there is no more direct route to a woman's heart, since pity is the first cousin of love. There grew between the girl and him a sort of clandestine understanding which in Ruth took the form of a secret breathlessly shared with him.

One day when King Anderson had gone to lunch and the two were alone in the bank, Shaw kissed her. As his lips touched her cheek lightly, he felt her body sway toward him almost imperceptibly, and his brain became filled with intoxication of her half surrender. At that moment he came as near loving her as he was capable of doing. The impulse to take her in his arms almost got the better of his judgment.

Instead, he stepped back and said hoarsely:

"What have I done, Ruth!"

She did not reply, but stood staring at him, her hand at her throat and fear and incredulity in her eyes; then she collapsed over her desk and buried her face in her hands.

For days afterward she did not dare to meet his eyes, but Shaw knew that he had made a deep impression, and that but for King Anderson he could win Ruth. But a conscientious and loyal woman like Ruth could never be persuaded to throw over a man to whom she had been bound by promise for years.

He considered various ways and means, but rejected them all for one reason or another. The girl became an obsession with him. She took possession of his waking hours and invaded his sleep. His mind painted intoxicating pictures of her as his sweetheart, as the head of his house, as the mother of his children. The thought of her crowded out even the vague plans that had been forming in his

mind. Then, quite suddenly, without any effort on his part, Fate one day delivered King Anderson into his hands.

THE three of them had been working exceptionally late one Saturday afternoon. Anderson was checking up his cash, preparatory to putting it in the safe, when he called out to Shaw over his shoulder and asked him for the loan of his fountain pen, as his own was out of order. As Shaw stepped into the teller's cage to comply with the request, Anderson was cleaning the ink off his fingers with the blotter.

"I don't know what's the matter with mine," Anderson said. "It leaks badly. I suppose the rubber bulb is worn out. I must send it to Eureka, Monday, to have it mended."

Shaw glanced at the pen lying on the counter. He noted that the black ink was oozing out of it. Near the leaking pen lay a sheet of paper. There was no writing of any kind upon it, but there was something else there that made Shaw draw his breath in sharply—three black ink-prints of King Anderson's fingers, each whorl and loop clear and distinct as if made by design.

As the teller bent over his work, Shaw stood staring at the three black finger-prints, his mind filled with a sinister intoxication. His hand stole out for a piece of paper. He busied himself for a moment gathering up other scraps and dropping them into the waste basket behind Anderson. The one with the three finger-prints on it he did not throw into the basket. Instead, he folded it up carefully and put it in his pocket.

That night he sat in his chair by the open window of the room above the

bank, thinking. The small square lay silent and deserted below him. Upon the porch of Wetherington's store two men were seated on tilted chairs, talking. The points of their lighted cigars glowed faintly in the shadow of the porch like a pair of sluggish fireflies. The night was so still that although the men were conversing in ordinary tones, Shaw could hear distinctly every word they said, and the slamming of the screen door upon a belated customer in the small restaurant across the street fell upon his ears like a pistol shot.

He smiled. In a week or so Little Lake would receive a jolt that would jar it from its lethargy. As he undressed for bed he thought of Ruth Hardy and of the new house he meant to build for her on the five acres which had come to him recently through the foreclosure of a short term mortgage. It was a sightly piece of ground facing the main road, just the sort of a place he had dreamed of for a home.

The next day, Sunday, he took dinner with Ruth and King Anderson at Ruth's house. As he had planned, Shaw turned the conversation to the opening of the quail season on the Wednesday following, and suggested that he and King go hunting some evening at dusk the following week. King replied that he would like to go if he could borrow a gun, and Shaw, knowing that Anderson had none, offered to loan the cashier one of his two, a single-barreled shotgun. King accepted, and at Shaw's suggestion the two men agreed upon the following Wednesday evening.

THE next morning Shaw took the auto stage to Eureka, the county seat. Here he did a little discreet shopping. The things he bought were rather odd. A sheet of commercial

gelatin of the kind from which ordinary glue is made, a bottle of glycerin, and a small vial of bichromate of ammonia; also some red tissue paper, some film developer, a pair of rubber gloves, and a dozen assorted blank cylinder lock keys.

Next, he shopped about for a camera. This was not so easy to find, as he did not want to buy a new one in a store where he was known, and an ordinary kodak would not do. He finally found an old photographer's camera in a second-hand shop on the water front. Upon examination he found that it would serve his purpose very well, so he bought it after some haggling with the proprietor over the price.

It was a little past noon when he returned to Little Lake and carried his purchases to his room above the bank. As the day was bright and cloudless he fell to work at once, after locking the door carefully and pulling all the window shades down, except the one of the rear window facing west, through which the bright midday sunlight fell.

In the strong light in front of this window he rigged a piece of board to which he pinned the scrap of paper with King Anderson's finger-prints. Before this he set up the camera, measuring the distance carefully for the correct focus. He took three exposures of the finger-prints to be sure to get at least one good one, then pulled down the shade and proceeded to develop them, by the light of the incandescent about which he had pasted the red tissue paper.

From the three negatives of the finger-prints he selected the clearest one. The other two he destroyed at once.

His next step was to soak the sheet of gelatin in hot water several degrees

under the boiling point. When the gelatin was dissolved he added certain proportions of glycerin and bichromate of ammonia, stirring it until the chemicals were thoroughly mixed. This gave him a highly sensitized compound which he spread while still warm on a piece of ordinary window glass to the thickness of an eighth of an inch, after having first coated the piece of glass with a solution of wax and benzine, so that the sensitized mass would not adhere to the glass after it had congealed.

After the mass had hardened and cooled sufficiently, he laid the film negative of the finger-prints on the sensitized plate and printed it thereon in the strong sunlight. This gave him a positive on the gelatin, which he washed in cold water. The water removed the bichromate and he had now in the gelatin a perfect reproduction of King Anderson's finger-prints, every whorl, loop, and declivity as clear and distinct as those on the tips of the three middle fingers of Anderson's right hand.

After the plate was dry he removed the gelatin from the glass, moistened it a little to make it pliable, and with a pair of scissors cut out the three engraved finger-prints. Then, slipping one of the rubber gloves on his right hand, he pasted one engraved print on the tip of each one of the three middle fingers.

Removing the glove he put it away carefully in the bottom of his trunk. After he was finished he destroyed every evidence of what he had done, and that same night took the camera into the woods, broke it up and buried the pieces in separate places. The remainder of the bichromate he poured out on the ground, and the vial he ground to pieces under his heel after removing and destroying the label.

Then he returned to his room and went to bed, well satisfied with the afternoon's work.

There remained now the final details of the setting of the stage for the undoing of the unsuspecting King Anderson. The most important of these Shaw had already attended to, by the planned hunting trip the following Wednesday evening—the day when the quail season opened. It was important because it was necessary to have Anderson spend a certain amount of time somewhere, for which he would be unable to account by corroborating witnesses.

THE next important thing was the bank's safe, an old-fashioned affair sunk into heavy masonry, more or less fireproof. Usually, the bank carried less than ten thousand dollars in cash in this safe, oftener less than five thousand. The surplus lay in the vaults of its Ereka correspondent, the Humboldt Bay First National Bank, and was drawn upon by check as needed. But the amount involved did not matter. Under the plan Shaw had worked out, the conviction of King Anderson would follow as surely for the robbery of a small amount as for a larger one.

Only three persons possessed the combination of the safe—Ezra Biggs, the president, King Anderson, and Shaw, himself, and only two persons, Anderson and Biggs, had the keys to the bank. Anderson came down early in the morning and opened up. He carried the key on his key ring together with the key of a small lacquered steel box which was kept in the safe, and which contained at all times some two thousand dollars in bills of large denominations, for emergency purposes.

It was upon this box whose smooth lacquered surface lent itself admirably to his purpose, that Shaw had decided to concentrate.

He spent Tuesday and Wednesday perfecting his plan. During the afternoon of the latter day he suggested to Anderson that he approach Biggs for a raise in salary. Upon Ruth's urging, Anderson complied, somewhat reluctantly. Five minutes later he returned to his post and reported that Biggs had refused his request point-blank.

Shaw's sympathy was well-simulated. He promised to use his influence with Biggs again. As a matter of fact he had discussed the raise that very morning with the old president, telling Biggs that Anderson had shown signs of dissatisfaction lately and advising Biggs not to grant the request.

He smiled to himself. His plan was working nicely.

That night he selected from his purchased key blanks two that would serve his purpose. From wax impressions which he had taken of the two keys on Anderson's key ring, he fashioned with a rat-tail file a pair identical with these. Getting the wax impression had been a simple matter, as he had known it would be. There were other less important keys on Anderson's ring as well, which Ruth and McCready, the aged bookkeeper, used when consulting the old records in the various filing cabinets, so Anderson always kept the ring hanging on a hook in his cage during the day.

Shaw simply watched his chance when the cashier went to lunch one noon, and took the wax impressions at his leisure.

Wednesday evening, just before closing time, when Biggs came out of his office as was his habit, to check up the cash with Anderson, Shaw played

what he considered his trump card. Writing out a check for a hundred dollars, he asked for a bill of that denomination. This was to impress Biggs with the fact that the two thousand dollars were in the box at that moment.

Shaw handed the check to Anderson in Biggs's presence. The cashier went to the lacquered box and got the hundred dollar note for Shaw, then locked the box and put it back in the safe, after which he stamped the check cancelled. Then, he put the cash away and closed the safe.

Biggs and Shaw left the bank together, Shaw telling Anderson that he was going to his room to get the guns ready for their quail-hunting excursion, and asking him to hurry so they would have two or three hours of daylight in which to shoot.

When the two men were outside, Biggs said:

"I took your advice and turned down Anderson's request for a raise. I suppose, however, we'll have to give it to him sooner or later."

"Yes," Shaw replied, "I guess he's entitled to it. Why don't you give him an increase of ten dollars per month, beginning next quarter? That'll keep him satisfied."

"I guess I'd better," Biggs agreed. "He's a good steady boy and he's been with us a long time."

Shaw nodded and went to his room.

HE busied himself with getting the guns and ammunition ready.

From some two dozen shells he removed the quail-shot, leaving the cartridges blank. To avoid suspicion at the light recoil which this would cause, he put an extra charge of powder in each blank cartridge. These two dozen shells were for Anderson. To

prevent the cashier from getting quail was an important part of his plan.

From the bottom of his trunk he took the rubber glove with Anderson's finger-prints and put it in the inside pocket of his mackinaw.

The cashier came up presently and the two men ate a light supper together in the restaurant across the street before starting out.

At Shaw's suggestion they forded the river and selected a sloping thicket on the far bank, parting at the foot of it and agreeing to meet at the summit, some two miles distant, the one getting there first to wait for the other. Before they parted Shaw pulled out his watch.

"It is now six thirty," he said, with an air of assumed carelessness. "We'll meet at the top of the ridge at eight o'clock, or a little after."

Anderson glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Mine is slow," he replied as he set the watch five minutes ahead. "See you in an hour and a half. So long."

Dusk was already falling when they parted. Shaw waited until the other was out of sight, then after firing his gun a few times, he doubled back across the river, being careful to put an intervening ridge of brush between himself and the slope where Anderson was hunting, and from whence there came now and then the report of the old single-barreled gun which Shaw had loaned him.

Walking briskly, Shaw approached the town and noted that the square was deserted as usual at that time of the evening, when every one was at supper. It had already grown dark enough so that in the event of being observed, he would naturally be taken for Anderson returning to the bank on some errand, which would help rather than jeopardize his plan.

He got in unobserved and locked the door behind him. Above the safe, the usual light was suspended. He did not dare to turn this off, so he made his way across the floor on hands and knees. Before the safe he paused for a moment and drew on the rubber glove, then turned the combination and pulled the massive door open.

It was the work of a moment to draw out the lacquered box, unlock it, and abstract therefrom the package of currency, which he dropped into his coat pocket.

Before replacing the box he wiped it carefully with his handkerchief lest other finger-prints than Anderson's might show on it, then moistening the fingertips of the rubber glove to make the hardened gelatin pliable, he pressed them firmly against the spotless lacquered surface.

He was careful not to leave more than two sets of finger-prints on the box, one on the front and one on the right side. Too many might arouse suspicion.

Then he put the empty box back in the safe, closed the door and prepared to leave.

He did not leave by the front door. Instead he tiptoed through the book-keeper's office, opened the rear window and dropped to the ground, being careful to wipe the window catch with his handkerchief. He left fresh finger-prints upon this also.

He waited for a moment to assure himself that no one was abroad. Then he pulled the window shut and walked swiftly down the lane toward the river.

On the bank of the stream, he paused for a moment and gathered a handful of dry twigs. Striking a match he set fire to them and burned up the rubber glove. He waited until the last scrap of the glove was burned, then he

stamped out the fire. The keys he tossed into a deep muddy water hole under an overhanging spur of granite. Then he forded the river and plunged into the brush where Anderson, little suspecting the machinery that had been set in motion to ruin him, was hunting quail.

When Shaw was well into the heavy second-growth brush, he heard a shot and fired his own gun to apprise the other of his presence. It was evident that Anderson was finding sport. Shaw smiled as he thought of the empty shells. The cashier was no doubt cursing his poor marksmanship.

PRESENTLY Shaw heard no more shooting. It was getting dark rapidly, almost too dark to see the quail. Shaw brought down two, then, satisfied, made his way toward the summit. He walked fast to make the top of the ridge by eight o'clock, the appointed time. The trip back to town had taken him over half an hour and the distance from the bank to the top of the ridge was all of a hard hour's walking.

He had timed himself carefully. It would appear that Anderson had done just what he, Shaw, had done—doubled back. The cashier would have over an hour and a half of his time that evening unaccounted for. Nothing on earth could save him from conviction. The fact that he got no game would work against him, too, and would make it appear that his shooting had been merely a blind.

Shaw knew that he himself would be put on the witness stand to testify, and that he would have to swear that he had heard Anderson's shots, but the prosecutor would want to know how he intended to prove that they might not have been some other hunter's.

The contemplation of this made Shaw chuckle softly. His testimony, while appearing to protect Anderson, would really amount to nothing at all in the face of the fact that the cashier would be unable to account for a full hour and a half of his time, by corroborating witness. The finger-prints on the lacquered box and on the catch of the unlocked window would do the rest.

Shaw's testimony, however, would mean a lot in Ruth's eyes, which pleased him mightily.

As he made his way through the dense undergrowth, he thought of her. He knew that however much pity she might feel for Anderson, her sense of honesty would never permit her to marry a convicted felon. The field would be open—for him.

It had grown quite dark by the time he approached the summit, and as he had heard no shots for a long time, he concluded that Anderson was waiting there for him as agreed upon.

He found the cashier there, seated on a stump, but instead of being hailed cheerily as he came up, Shaw was greeted by a groan.

"The gun exploded—I'm hurt," Anderson said in a low tone in which the other heard, with a chill of apprehension, the note of pain and anguish.

Shaw sucked his breath in sharp and struck a match. The cashier unwound a bloody handkerchief from his right hand. In the flickering light Shaw saw that the ends of the four fingers of the hand which Anderson held out to him were badly lacerated!

"It happened about half an hour ago, just after I had got here," the cashier said, with chattering teeth. "I fired at a flock of quail. A piece of the gun barrel missed my face by a fraction of an inch and buried itself in the

stump I'm sitting on and another piece broke my watch. It certainly was a close shave for me. I started for home two or three times, but I was so weak from loss of blood that I decided to wait for you. I believe I fainted a while back," he added, apologetically.

Shaw bent nearer. He held the dying match to the face of the watch on Anderson's wrist, and saw that the dial was shattered, and that the hands of it pointed to seven thirty-five where the time-piece had stopped, when the gun exploded and crushed it, nearly three-quarters of an hour before.

Anderson was pointing with his shaking left hand to the fragment of steel buried in the stump, as the dead match dropped from Shaw's fingers.

In that startled moment during which Shaw tasted the bitterness of defeat and the dread of the morrow, he wavered between fleeing, or shoot-

ing Anderson down, then and there and transferring the money to the cashier's pockets.

The problem was solved for him quite unexpectedly, for as Shaw nervously jerked his gun from the ground to raise it to his shoulder, a twig of the second growth redwood of the stump upon which the cashier was sitting caught the triggers, and the discharge of both barrels struck Shaw full in the chest.

As he staggered back his right hand flew instinctively to the pocket of his mackinaw that contained the stolen money, and they found him there late that night after Anderson had made his way back to town—found him stretched on his back, quite dead.

On the ground about him lay scattered a score or more of crisp, new bank notes of large denominations, every one a perfect specimen of the engraver's art—and genuine.

THE END.



The Value of Advertising

A FEW years ago the Philippines became dotted with billboards bearing the picture of a benevolent-looking American lady in the costume of the early eighties who advertised the merits of a well-known "vegetable remedy."

"*Sino ang Americana?*" queried Philippine belles. "Who is this American lady?"

The boss sign painter, a native of Lydia Pinkham's own town, felt the urge for further publicity for Lynn, Massachusetts. Speaking in the Tagalog dialect, he announced: "She's the leader of fashion for the United States," and turned away, leaving the women apparently satisfied.

Ten days later the balconies of Manila movie houses blossomed forth with native charmers who wore the identical garments of the pictured Lydia. It was all there: high-necked waist, ruffled collar, and string of beads. To their belief they had copied the latest American styles, and it was not until the American press came out with the statement that they were nearly three decades behind the times that the high-necked garments were bestowed on laundresses and others of that ilk.

C. A. Freeman.

Right Off the Ship

Bully of the customs was Bill Gotch, and no man was going to put anything over on him—which still didn't keep him from putting one over on himself

By HUME SEYMOUR

THE thin mist of early morning was beginning to rise as the tramp steamer, Berkshire Maid, just in from Hull, and wallowing high in the oily water, completed tying up at Dock No. 15.

Lolling against a bale of cotton which was to be part of her outgoing cargo was Bill Gotch.

This Gotch was a large man, hard of body and heart and inordinately suspicious. It was for these somewhat negative virtues that the customs chief of the district had chosen him for this job. Bill was the type that makes an excellent railroad "dick" or chain-gang guard.

Gotch felt his present position ideal, as the possibilities of personal injury were slight, while the opportunities for inflicting it on others were correspondingly great. His customs badge gave him self-respect, and his gun commanded it from others.

"There's been altogether too much liquor brought off these freighters lately, Gotch," the chief said to him the day before, "and I'm putting you down there to stop it!"

How sweet had those words been to Bill Gotch!

For several hours Bill watched the movement aboard the vessel, and punctuated the monotony with occasional spurts of tobacco juice at a hole some feet away.

It was almost noon when a little, sawed-off seaman, clad in his best shore outfit, made his way down the gang-plank with a suitcase in his hand.

Gotch arose and started ominously across the dock toward the descending figure. There was an unpleasant glint in his eyes. Here was game.

"Humph!" he grunted to himself. "That ain't even clever!"

As the small man reached the pier and started away, Gotch caught him roughly by the arm.

"Hey, feller," he sneered, "what you got in that bag?"

The man dropped his eyes.

"Nothin'," he murmured guiltily.

"None o' that stuff, guy!" Gotch laughed harshly. "Come on. What you got?"

He squeezed the little man's arm until the sailor cringed with pain.

"I ain't got nothin' but a present for me gal!" he blurted out.

Gotch's laugh was harsher this time.

"Now ain't that smart!" he mouthed sarcastically. "I s'pose ya got a suitcase full o' nighties an' perfoom, eh? Say, guy, do ya think I'm *that* dumb? Come on. Open her up!"

He reached for the suitcase. 'At this the sailor tried to pull away.

"Don't open it!" he pleaded hurriedly.

Gotch roared with laughter at his victim's discomfort.

"Don't open it, eh?" he chuckled sarcastically. "Present for the girlfriend, eh? What kinda labels on them bottles of perfoom?" and he laughed at his own joke, as he grabbed the bag and tore it from the seaman's hands.

"None o' that, you poor simp," growled Gotch. "I'm here to stop you birds from takin' liquor ashore, and nobody's gonna put anything over on me."

The seaman seemed at his wit's end, which duly added to Gotch's delight.

"It ain't perfoom, officer. Honest it ain't!" he whined. "An' it ain't likker! It's a cat! I'm takin' her to my gal." He looked up with pleading eyes at the towering Gotch. "Listen, officer, it took me near a hour an' a half to catch the bloomin' critter, an' if she gets out, I got to do it all over ag'in!"

This was too much for Gotch.

"That's sure a new one, at that, bud," he shouted gleefully. "Gotta give ya credit!" Then his face hardened, and he snarled, "Listen, sap, ya don't s'pose I'm fallin' for *that* song an' dance, do ya? Open that bag before I—"

The seaman shrugged his small shoulders despairingly.

"O. K., Big Feller," he sighed, dropping to one knee beside the suitcase. "If she gets out she'll head right back aboard, an' I'll have to spend—"

"Shut up!" ordered Gotch curtly, "an' get it open! It 'll only cost ya five bucks a bottle."

No sooner had the lid been raised than a streak flew out of the bag and Bill Gotch's startled eyes followed the flight of a yellow and white cat as she dashed up the gangway and disappeared into the bowels of the ship.

"There ye are!" whimpered the

sailor. "What did I tell ye? What did I—"

AS soon as Bill could recover from his surprise, he grinned.

"Gee, feller," he murmured, faintly apologetic. "An' me thinkin' you was tryin' to pull a fast one, sure! That's one on me."

But the little man was already making his way up the gangplank, grumbling loudly.

Two hours later the sailor appeared again on deck, suitcase in hand, and commenced his descent to the dock. Gotch met him.

"Sorry, guy," he muttered, frowning uncomfortably and trying to justify his error, "but we gotta do our dooty, ya know."

The sailor looked at him sadly; sighed; set the bag down and knelt beside it. He was fumbling with the lock when Bill anticipated his move.

"Now don't get me wrong, guy," he said hurriedly. "You don't have to let that damn critter out ag'in! It's O. K. On your way, bud."

He watched the thin little figure disappear around the edge of the warehouse at the end of the pier, then he seated himself once more on the bale of cotton.

"Sure a hell of a present fer your gal!" he sneered.

It annoyed him no little that he had not made a "kill," and even more, that he had been shown up.

"But a guy's gotta be on his toes in this here business!" he muttered in justification. "A guy's gotta—"

He looked up. The words died in his throat. On the port rail, gazing with sad and disillusioned eyes, and musing on the ways of mice and men, sat the yellow and white ship's cat.

The Men Who Make The Argosy

EUGENE CUNNINGHAM

Author of "Lord of Liarsburg," "Red Decks," "Reverse Knock-Out," etc.

SINCE I came to Texas in the '90's, at a tender and trustful age, I always think of myself as a Complete Tejano. Grew up as many Texas kids did, with a burning ambition to shoot like Wild Bill Hickok and Diamond Dick combined and to ride just anything that had two hairs to cross. Learned my local color by finding it with the end of my nose—as the bronc went one way and I continued on another course.

Very little schooling of the formal sort. Was fortunate in having the most hard-headed and logical-minded (and two-listed and belligerent) of fathers and a mother who gave me just about all I know of the English language—by her own manner of speech. I attribute such writing abilities as I have to a combination of the constructive impulse inherited from a mechanically-minded father, with a word-sense and sense of the dramatic coming from a literary mother.

It was a colorful environment, the Texas I knew then—cowboys and bronc busters, Texas Rangers, Quantrell and Mosby veterans, sheriffs who *were* sheriffs, gunmen and racing men, with the tales they had to tell a small boy with a steel trap memory.

Odd, but it was to be many years before I wrote a word of the stories I heard then. The newer experiences were first handled. Disappeared from home and came up in sight again as a barefooted deckhand in a pre-war Navy. Tropic service; Mexican patrol and Central American; Alaska. Freight convoy, New York to Europe, with some recruiting service, was my heroic war record.

After the war, to get the office taste out of mouth, a nice horseback trip from Costa Rica to Guatemala, *Wide World* correspondent. Plenty of adventures of one sort or another, from wild animals and wilder men, ending in the blaze of glory—such as it was—of the Unionista revolution in Guatemala City.

Then back to the States, "Gypsying through Central America," an expansion of travel articles; "The Trail to Apacaz," a novel of Lee Christmas's adventures, mostly; lots of magazine fiction and even some political articles—all partial grist from those wanderings. Some of the yarns you have had from me, in ARGOSY, are of the same vintage and bouquet.

Free-lancing in San Francisco remains in memory one of the pleasantest (and sometimes most thrilling) four years of my not-exactly-prosaic life. There is the most colorful city in the world (yes, I've been in L. A.) to me. Shroud the town with a fog and give



me a good stick and I'll guarantee to find excitement, romance, mystery, within the hour—any time. There is an indefinable appeal to the "Gray City;" it's my adopted home town.

Perhaps, sitting here in the middle of the cow-country, where we've just staged the Southwest's Greatest Rodeo, I have more pleasure from writing a San Francisco yarn than I had in the old days, sitting atop Russian Hill and looking down on fog-wreathed gas lights. Anyway, here I sit, with the Rio Grande Valley stretching away from my door, six cents from Juarez, a noted penny-ante player, dodging all clubs—particularly golf clubs—with for neighbor and co-rider of mountain trails that spinner of most excellent yarns, Wilton West; with a majority in the family, nowadays, of three women against me.

Hobbies? There isn't space! Riding, walking, fast driving, poker, carpentry, yarning with old-timers, putting 'em into yarns, chicken dinners with Brother Jesse Grinstead—(Note to editor: To fill page, add any you know which are not included. But *think*—carefully—before setting down any!).



Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint



WERE-LEOPARDS

SUPERSTITION! How long it has gripped mankind—and how hard it is to elude, ghosts, witches, were-wolves—who of us hasn't creepy spells of the eerie world in which they abide? Theodore Roscoe, who gives us "Leopard Teeth," in this issue, adds a few remarks about the background of this curious tale:

Lycanthropes! Whose blood hasn't chilled at mention of these ghoulish phantasms of the night—these creatures who are men in daytime and preying ghouls when the moon comes? Superstition? Old World legendry? Yes. But a superstition which persists in spite of civilization's advance to make that advance seem dubious. When the back corners of America can believe in vampires, when Irish cottagers and Austrian peasants shudder at mention of the were-wolf, how strong must such a belief be in the African bush! Queerly enough, the legend is almost universal. The Balkans fear the were-wolf. Malaya, Borneo, India believe in men who can change into tigers. In Africa the haunt takes the form of lion or leopard.

It is believed that the man who assumes a leopard-form at night will drink the blood of a slain victim, and that life blood will extend to infinity the span of his own years. In certain backward tribes of central Africa more than one unhappy native, accused of this foul wizardry, has writhed at the burning stake. Such writers as Colonel Powell and Frederick Migeod tell of a curious offshoot of this superstition—the dreadful Society of the Human Leopards. This charming fraternal organization which flourished in the Congo (may still flourish there) followed the incredible practice of *pretending* to be a clan of were-leopards. Its members would garb themselves in leopard skins, wear pads on their feet to leave animal tracks, and, attacking a victim with a pronged trident, tear out the victim's heart. After enjoying an unholy feast and certain ghastly rites, the members would disband in the jungle. The body, when found, would appear to have been devoured by jungle cats.

French, British and Belgian colonial governments fought to exterminate this grisly brotherhood; but the clandestine methods of the society frustrated detection, and to this day its black operatives may creep through the night-hung Congo jungles bent on some nefarious mission. Meantime, such a band of pseudo-wraiths serves to strengthen the local superstition. Furthermore, certain mental disorders tend to make the madman believe himself a lycanthrope—a vampire, or were-wolf. There are records of insane men who attacked their victims with animal ferocity, attempting to satisfy a thirst for human blood. It was from some such source as this, perhaps, that the wretched superstition sprang.

But remember—as the good Dutch doctor of *Dracula* informed his audience during curtain-call after the play! Remember—when you go to bed at night and the wind stirs your curtains and the moon rides low in the black sky. Remember—there *may* be such things!

THEODORE ROSCOE.

GOLDEN BULLETS

ALWAYS there is a story behind Erle Stanley Gardner's curious whispering tales. Hear about what lies behind "Golden Bullets":

As I write this yarn there are four thirty-thirty shells on my desk. And those shells have silver bullets in them. Gold bullets aren't so common, but they exist.

They come from the Yaqui country where the Indians sneak up the main ridge of the Sierra Madre range and barter gold for rifles and reloading tools. They carry powder back into the country with them, but they don't pack lead. Silver, and, in a pinch, gold, make too good bullets.

The silver bullets and the foundation of the story were given me by a man who has more hair raising experiences in his past than any one I've known in years. He's been all over the world.

He knows of a mine, situated very much as the mine that's described in this yarn, and he knows what happened to two people who worked that mine. One of them managed to get away. The other was placed on an ant hill, and the soles of his feet were skinned

with a skinning knife. Then he was told to go home.

My informant also had a whirl at trying to find a Yaqui mine. He got out with his life, and he had some action in the course of which he accumulated the silver bullets.

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER.

PAGING MR. LEFAVOUR

AWHILE ago we published a letter from Mr. James LeFavour, who was rather surprised to see himself in print in "The Radio Gun-Runners." Ralph Milne Farley, author of that story and of "The Radio Menace," which starts in this issue, replies:

I have read with interest the letter from Mr. James H. LeFavour in the current ARGOSY.

Please tell Mr. LeFavour that my almost invariable custom is to pattern the characteristics of each character after some one whom I know, and to twist the name of the model into a name for the character, sufficiently different so that no one will recognize the source except myself.

Practically the only exception to this rule so far was the name of the hero of "The Radio Gun-Runners." That name merely came to me out of thin air.

Accordingly it is not unlikely that Mr. LeFavour, who says that he enjoys my stories, was reading one of them at the time I was writing "The Radio Gun-Runners," and that his thoughts flashed across space and suggested his most uncommon name to me. In no other way can I explain the coincidence.

ROGER SHERMAN HOAR.

ANOTHER Ray Cummings defender takes the floor:

Spring Lake Beach, N. J.

May I climb into the boat sailing to the defense of Ray Cummings? Without his stories ARGOSY would lose fifty per cent of its attraction for me. It's hard to wait until the last installment comes out before starting the story.

Confound it! Why is humanity so selfish? As I've told you before, I care little for Westerns. As some of your readers have said, "Read one and you've read them all." There isn't the possibility in them that there is in other types.

But what of it if I don't care for them? There's a very large percentage of readers who do. And haven't I got my dime's worth if I pass them up and read the others? Well, rather, and then some. I'd have it if I paid

a quarter instead of a dime. My great wonder is how the editor can please so many readers, for to please them all could never be done.

At this time may I also express my admiration for your aviation stories, particularly those of the World War?

I have just finished reading "Fools Rush In," and laughed so heartily and so long that my wife came in to see what had tickled me to such an extent. I don't care much for the colored comics you've had—but there I go—*somebody else does*. Keep it up. ARGOSY cannot be improved. Not for me.

W. E. PA Delford.

MR. THOMAS breaks a silence of fifteen years with an interesting letter:

Hammond, Ind.

I observe that it is customary in letters printed in "Argonotes" to tell how long one has been a reader of your magazine. I didn't want to go into this, but must fall in line and touch on the number of pleasant evenings your weekly has given me. My memory seems dim regarding exact dates and names, but I know I have been a constant reader since 1914 or 1915, at which time I was young, single and a traveling salesman.

Many times have I wanted to sit down and write my appreciation of this story or that, but somehow have always neglected to do so.

So perhaps I can crowd the feelings of fifteen years into one letter, although I realize I'm going to do a lot of injustice to many wonderful writers.

I think, however, that all of us who read a great deal find, after years of such reading, that a few stories stay with us. Most of the others, even though we enjoy them greatly at the moment, are forgotten in a few weeks or months. We could not even recall the smallest part of the plot or mention any of the characters. In reading over "Argonotes" I sense the same feeling in lots of your other readers, although they may not express it just as I. For instance, "The Ship of Ishtar" imprinted itself upon my memory. How long ago you printed this story I don't remember, but it must have been all of eight years. The same is true of "The Moon Pool" and "The Metal Monster." Wonderful stories these—the kind that happen about once in a decade. The fact that I have read hundreds of so-called scientific stories since without getting the least bit excited, proves to me that the mastery of this type of story lies only in the head of a gifted few.

I don't want this to be construed to mean that the above type of story appeals to me

most. I enjoy most all your stories. During the last year or so W. Wirt's stories stand out. They possess a subtle punch lacking in most adventure tales. Years ago I enjoyed Westerns, but I have come to look upon them with a jaundiced eye. The plots have become so similar that one can just about figure out the whole story after the first installment.

I certainly don't hang with the type of reader (see "Argonotes" recently) who reads with a weather eye cocked for some flaw in author's description or historical facts, that he has discovered in his encyclopedia or other reference. After all, we read to be entertained, and unless one can lose one's self in the tale, it is better to take up the study of ancient history, law or similar subjects. I feel and have felt always that you are giving a finer lot of stories of all types than any other magazine I know of.

I can think of only one complaint to register and there is nothing I know that you can do about it—my boy, who will soon be twelve years old, has become an ARGOSY addict, so it is necessary for me to purchase two copies every Wednesday to keep peace in the house that night.

V. ROAN THOMAS.

THE short articles we have been publishing readily adapt themselves as subjects for school compositions, as this reader discovered:

Pine Bluff, Ark.

I am very glad to see *John Solomon* back as I have always enjoyed his adventures.

My daughter said, "Please see when Wirt is writing another China story." We also like *Mme. Storey* and *Gillian Hazeltine*. In fact, we read all the stories, but these are our favorites.

The articles by Minna Irving and others are fine and often are of great help to my daughter in her school work. Her work in school has been interesting to her as she had an opportunity to get so many unusual articles from ARGOSY.

MRS. MARY HURLEY.

ANOTHER list of favorite authors:

Duluth, Minn.

Your magazine seems to improve with every new copy and the variety is surely well distributed. Your entire writing staff is above par excellence. There is an old saying that variety is the spice of life. Well, the ARGOSY sure has it. Your character sketches are very interesting and one feels as if he is on real

speaking terms with the authors and consequently will like their stories better. Bedford-Jones's *John Solomon* stories are great. Just finished reading Fred MacIsaac's "A Great Man's Shoes." When he can write like that give us more and more. Stribling's story, "Backwater," was good due to the fact that the author made his characters act so realistic and true to life. Kline, Lynde and Gardner complete my list of favorites. You can count on me as a booster. I believe in letting others know what the ARGOSY stands for in first-class reading fiction.

E. W. MAGNUSON.

A FEW cheers for Otis Adelbert Kline:

Des Moines, Iowa.

In the ARGOSY dated February 15 I saw a great deal of criticism of Otis Kline, and his masterly answers to the critics. I would like to have the editor and Mr. Kline know that for one, I consider his stories some of the very best I have ever read, and can hardly wait until I have another of his stories in your great magazine.

The ARGOSY, as a whole, is fine. The stories I especially enjoyed were "Captain Nemesis," "Phantom in the Rainbow," "Maza of the Moon," and "Hawk of Hazard." I always enjoy Western stories.

HAROLD PAUL.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

I have noticed, in your "Argonotes," quite a few readers expressing their doubting opinions of "Maza of the Moon."

If one has gold plated metal it is foolish to scrape the surface to expose the dull base. I did not search for inconsistencies in "Maza." I was too busy enjoying it. I think it was a perfect story.

I've read ARGOSY since school days and have always thought your best story was "The Ship of Ishtar," but that now has a rival, "Maza of the Moon."

Waiting for more like it, I am

REGINALD PALMER.

PERHAPS some ARGOSY fan will want this old copy:

Chelsea, Mass.

My father and I are ardent ARGOSY fans—every week without fail. You have fine stories and excellent authors. Please publish a sequel to "Captain Nemesis"!

In "Argonotes"—issue of February 8—I noted Jacob Miller's request for old copies. While on a week-end trip to Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire, last summer, I dis-

covered an old copy in a farmhouse, *The Argosy* and the *Peterson Magazine*, September, 1900. I wonder if any reader would desire to add this particular copy to their collection?

EDWARD LESLIE BUNKER,
246 Chestnut St.

It looks as if we shall have to step lively to give Mr. Young an issue he likes better than that of March 22:

Columbus, Ohio.

I pick up the plume to credit you for your March 22 edition. I think it's the best yet, and I have been reading ARGOSY for four years. Three of the serials, Cooper's "Caged," Farley's "Radio Gun-Runners" and Bedford-Jones's "John Solomon's Biggest Game" I knew were good. But "Gone North," the fourth, surpasses them like a shooting star going through the universe.

"The Blue Cat of Buddha" was ecstatic. I take off my hat to Roscoe for vivid description and realistic tenseness. My emotional reaction ran the gantlet in this novelette. All three of the other short stories were exceptional. I shall save this issue to compare it with others.

Your for the maintenance of a superior magazine,
C. JACKSON YOUNG.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

6-7



Looking Ahead!

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W. C. TUTTLE

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Again science, in the hands of a power-mad criminal, battles the forces of law and order—this time with world control the stake. A gripping fantastic novelette by

MURRAY LEINSTER

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF JUNE 14th



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BUT you save still more if you buy now. Everything's included in this special low price offer. Big, rugged 10 Cable Exerciser adjustable to 200 lbs. resistance. Complete Wall Exercising Parts for Back and Shoulder development. Hand Grip that builds husky Wrists and Forearms. Head Gear to bring out those dormant Neck Muscles. Foot Stirrup and Harness that develops sinewy calf and Thigh Muscles. Regulation Heavy Skip Rope for Speed, Endurance and Wind. And a completely illustrated Course of instruction. All This—For Only \$3.98! Take advantage of this temporary low price offer NOW.

Just send your name and address. We'll ship everything out by return mail. Pay postman only \$3.98 plus postal charges. Outside United States, Cash With Order.

INSTITUTE FOR PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, INC.
13 East 22nd Street Dept. F-6 New York, N. Y.



This Queer Little Automatic Device Protects My Car From Thieves **ELECTRICALLY!**

I have hit on something truly amazing. Since the first discoveries of radio, I know there has been nothing so startling and uncanny. My little secret device guards every part of your automobile from spare tire to headlights and steering wheel. In your garage or on the street it is on the job 24 hours a day. Never sleeps, rests or gets tired. Already approved by insurance companies and motor associations. Now offered on 5-day test.

Puzzles Everyone!

THIS little, automatic "electric-watchman" invention is called "Devil-Dog." It is not only a new kind of device, it is an *entirely new idea!* Absolutely unique and utterly different than anything anyone ever saw before. So startling that it grips the imagination of everyone from the millionaire Rolls-Royce owner to the fellow who drives a second-hand Ford. Until he knows the secret every motorist will swear that you have some one hiding in your car. He just simply can't *believe* there can be such a device as this queer "electrical-watchman."

INSTALLED IN 10 MINUTES—COSTS NOTHING TO OPERATE

Every man who owns a car can afford Devil-Dog. Actually, no man who owns a car can afford to be *without* this inexpensive protection. Last year over 116,000 automobiles were stolen in this country. Millions of dollars worth of spare parts were pilfered by sneak thieves. Now Devil-Dog can be installed by anyone in ten minutes or less. There is absolutely no cost for operation. No extra

batteries to buy. It will last as long as the car. And you hide the secret switch button anywhere you want to around your car. It's nothing but common sense for a man to grab Devil-Dog the very first time he sees it demonstrated. No wonder distributors already are cleaning up young fortunes!

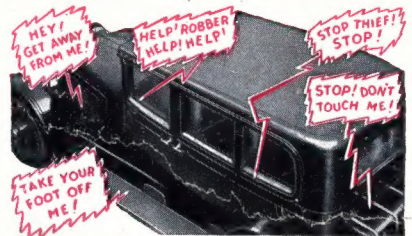
5-DAY FREE TEST

I invite readers of this magazine to send for the special 5-day test offer now being made on Devil-Dog. Test it. Show your friends. If your present income is less than about \$50 a week, profit opportunities as my spare-time or full-time representative may surprise you. My one condition is, I want men to help me *quick!* Write me today!

AUTOMATIC
DEVIL DOG

NORTHWEST ELECTRIC CORP.

Dept. H-210, Pukwana, So. Dakota



RECORD EARNINGS—\$138 IN A DAY!

Every Devil-Dog sale brings you a real profit. No penny-ante little business! That's another reason Devil-Dog is a real big money maker! G. Oliver, Illinois representative, reports, "Made \$138 in a day. This is the easiest way to make money quick I ever heard of. My next order will be for 1,000." That's the top record so far. Who will beat it first?

POLICE BUY FOR ARMORED CAR

Richard Jacques, Canada, just started, writes, "Here's our order for 24 Devil-Dogs. I have sold one to the police for their armored car. Am also getting letters from the Chief of Police and the Detective Department. Tomorrow we demonstrate to the motor league."

Northwest Electric Corp., Dept. H-210,
Pukwana, S. Dak.

Rush territory details and your 5-day test
offer without obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

Town..... State.....